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Začátky amerického feminismu

The Beginnings of American Feminism

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„Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a výhradně s použitím citovaných pramenů, literatury a dalších odborných zdrojů.“

“I declare that the following MA thesis is my own work for which I used only the sources and literature mentioned.”

V Praze dne……... podpis……..

I would like to thank Prof. David L. Robbins for his feedback on my work and guidance for my research.

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1. Introduction

The first questions that one must ask concerning this thesis are "What is feminism to America and when did it begin?" According to the Webster dictionary, "Feminism is 1: the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes 2: organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests."[1] The important information one obtains from the definition is that feminism may be viewed as a theory or an organized activity, and that it works within the realms of all parts of society. In order to determine the beginnings of feminism in America, it is necessary to analyze the situation of women within the various circles of society and take into consideration the perception of women within each certain circle. The purpose of this paper is to outline the roots of feminism in America, to examine how it has changed over time, and to highlight great movers and shakers in the American feminist movement.

The development in the history of women in the United States may be seen from several perspectives. It is possible to compare the different ways women were treated in various parts of the USA, in various classes and communities. For example, it may be interesting to note the differences between the Native Americans and the first Puritan settlers. Native Americans had a matrilineal society, for instance, among the Iroquois. This clashed severely with the patriarchal model of the Puritan society and various records exist of women refusing to go back to their former society after having experienced the freedom of the Native American women. A different cultural understanding of gender roles and a different level of treatment of both sexes across the societies provides ample ground for research. The aim of the work, however, is to concentrate and trace the development in the thinking of the society springing and evolving from within the Puritan one.

[1] A. Merriam Weber, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Co.) 418.

The most prominent female figure in the Puritan society is probably Anne Bradstreet, whose poetry "was quite popular in England because it contained the first poetry written by the English colonists in the New World."[2] Her work, which is placed within the framework of the Puritan patriarchal society, transcends it in many ways through the consciousness of the author. Her self-awareness in her poems is not only of being a wife and a mother, but also of an author whose talent and work the male public will not acknowledge. As she says herself, "They'll say it's stol'n, or else it was by chance."[3] She makes thus evident the male prejudice that a woman cannot write, for all her efforts are either chance or plagiarism. Nevertheless, although she successfully discusses women's position in the Puritan society, her work may be labeled as "protofeminist," since it perceives and aims at equality in the spirit and realms of literature but not exactly at women's rights in all the realms of the established Puritan society.

She, nevertheless, shows that awareness of women's position in society always existed. The question then is - when did feminism begin? In terms of a feminist movement "most western feminist historians assert that all movements that work to obtain women's rights should be considered feminist movements, even when they did not (or do not) apply the term to themselves."[4] Other historians assert that the term should be limited to the modern feminist movement and its descendants. Those historians use the label "protofeminist" to describe earlier movements."[5] Based on this historic perception the question should thus be - what started the feminist movement? In terms of theory, the first female work considered to be the foundation of modern feminism is Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (published 1792 in Britain and 1794 in Philadelphia).

[2] Martin Procházka a spol., *Lectures on American Literature* (Prague : UK Nakladatelství Karolinum, 2002) 30.
[3] Anne Bradstreet "The Prologue" *Norton Anthology of American Literature Volume* 1, ed. Ronald Gottesman, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 42.
[4] Charlotte Witt, *Feminist History of Philosophy,* 20th March 2011 <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-femhist/index.html>.
[5] Eileen H. Botting, Sarah L. Houser, "'Drawing the Line of Equality": Hannah Mather Crocker on Women's Rights' in *American Political Science Review* (2006), 100: 265-278.

The influence of this work on America and other writers is seen in the nature of its argument that combats all fields of the male-dominated society and challenges notions the patriarchal society imposed on women. The aim of this thesis is to see how this challenge was made in the patriarchal society and to concentrate on its development from around the establishment of the USA. The method will be to establish an outline of the main concepts that existed in the era, how they evolved, what obstacles women had to face in their quest for freedom, and what was their relationship to African-American women that had been integrated as inferiors into the society through the establishment of slavery.

2. Feminist Thought in the US

2.1 The Formation of the "New Country" (1776) and the Position of Women

The date of the 4th of July 1776 is forever carved in the hearts of Americans, celebrated as a state holiday and the Independence Day of the USA, the day *The Declaration of Independence* was adopted. In the period, when America was forming into a new nation and establishing itself, it seemed natural that a new set of laws would be required and new ideas challenging the old system would develop. The question of women's position in society, though not the prime issue, was certainly part of these contemplations.

In fact, these contemplations emerged as early as 1775 in Thomas Paine's article "An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex". The author best known for his pamphlet *Common Sense,* which started the revolution, was very sensitive to the issues of women and may be seen as a man with feminist leanings. Not only was he the first man to open in print the debate on women's position in society, but he was also the first who explored the injustices women had to encounter in their marriages. His article about women's position was an attempt at the analysis of women's inequality worldwide. Although he did not explicitly talk about the position of women in America and was more restrained to other nations and "savages", he was aware of the tyrannous power of men and that they exercised this power. Furthermore, he stated that "Society, instead of alleviating their [women's] condition, is to them [women] the source of new miseries."[1] This shows that Paine was aware of the problems the society imposed upon women. He was also aware of the dangers to which women exposed themselves when he stated "They cannot be the means of life without exposing themselves to the loss of it; every revolution which they undergo, alters

[1] Thomas Paine, "An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex," 24th April 2011 <http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=343&chapter=17019&layout=html&Itemid=27>.

their health, and threatens their existence."[2] The dangers of childbirth did not appear to him as trivial matters or expected sacrifices, and he acknowledged their importance. In addition, he was aware of women's brutal treatment:

> Even in countries where they may be esteemed most happy, constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods, robbed of freedom of will by the laws, the slaves of opinion, which rules them with absolute sway, and construes the slightest appearances into guilt; surrounded on all sides by judges, who are at once tyrants and their seducers [..] Who does not feel for the tender sex?[3]

Paine sensitively accounted for women's uneasy position in society, aware of the dangers to their reputation that any divergence from the expected decorum might bring. He was aware, also, of the injustice of the legal system, which, though he did not explicitly state it, made all the woman's earnings, property and belongings, even the children, objects belonging solely to the husband. In addition, he was aware that women could not conduct any legal operation without their husband's consent; even their will had to be approved of and signed by the husband. Thus, Paine appears as a prime speaker on behalf of women and ills done to them, and although he does perceive women's different biological destinies, he sees them as equal partners of men that offer sacrifices of a different kind but, nevertheless, deserving similar honor, praise, and equality.

There are, however, other instances where the question of women's position was made. For example, the position of women was considered imbedded in the claims of the

[2] Paine 24th April 2011 <http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=343&chapter=17019&layout=html&Itemid=27>.
[3] Paine 24th April 2011 <http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=343&chapter=17019&layout=html&Itemid=27>.

Declaration of Independence, which granted "all men are created equal",[4] with the term "men" referring generally to humanity; the reality, nevertheless, was quite different. In fact, there were attempts even to disregard this interpretation by some; for example, in his study *Inventing America* (1978), Garry Willis "tells us that Jefferson means 'equal' in possessing a moral sense."[5] Such an interpretation thus differs greatly, since it suggests a common moral sense that is inherited rather than a natural right to equality. In fact, such a belief perfectly corresponds to the belief shared by white men of the era. It may be said that the only truthful statement depicting the era would be "All men were created equal but they were not born so."

This latter would confirm the reality, where neither women nor the minorities, in particular, the Afro-Americans who were merged into the community as an inferior race through slave trade, were given any set of equal legal rights. (The policy with the Native Americans differed greatly depending on the various ethnic groups and tribes, and they were seen rather on the periphery of the white society with their own set of rules within each community). It is thus no surprise that the overlapping issues and concerns would lead the two groups of the "fair sex" and Afro-Americans to merge together before they became two separate movements. The question of rights and roles became an important one.

In fact, women themselves did question their new role on the eve of the revolution, and one example of such women was Abigail Adams. Although it has been argued by some like Jennifer Shingleton that Abigail Adams' final stance was not truly a feminist one and that much of her life consisted in drawing upon factual necessities demanded by the

[4] Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence," *Norton Anthology of American Literature Volume* 1, ed. Ronald Gottesman, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 495.
[5] Quoted as a footnote in *Norton Anthology of American Literature Volume* 1, ed. Ronald Gottesman, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 495.

situation to manage what would have been a husband's duty had he been present[6], women such as Abigail Adams did attempt to learn of their new ascribed roles and questioned their situation, perhaps even genuinely questioning their own thoughts on a demand for women's rights. Abigail's letter to her husband (though it must be argued, available to the modern reader and not to the wide public at the time since the private correspondence of the family was not published until 1840 by Abigail's grandson and even so it did not include all letters) is quite famous among Americans for its concerns for women:

> I long to hear that you have declared an independancy— and by the way in the New Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Laidies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the Hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies, we are determined to foment a Rebelion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.[7]

The awareness that the revolution was a time to demand a change of laws that neglected women's suffering is visible in the plea for men to be more "favourable" to women than under the English law. Although, as Pauline Schlosser argues, many scholars echo Janet Whitney's view stating that the demand is limited and addresses the issues of men who physically abused their wives[8], Schlosser provides opposing views of scholars such as Butterfield who see a possibility of Abigail's wanting a franchise. In fact, Schlosser goes even further, arguing that Abigail applied Enlightenment thought of equality to gender and

[6] Jennifer Shingleton, "Abigail Adams: The Feminist Myth," 20th March 2011 <http://www.tcr.org/tcr/essays/EPrize_Adams.pdf>.
[7] Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March 1776, L. H. Butterfield et al. eds., Adams Family Correspondence, 1:136 quoted in Pauline Schloesser, *Fair Sex: White Women and Racial Patriarchy in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 121.
[8] Pauline Schloesser, *Fair Sex: White Women and Racial Patriarchy in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 122.

that she also demanded that the virtual representation of the husband be rejected for an actual representation by the wife.[9] This would prove Abigail was aware that women's position was not equal to that of men. Certainly, she toyed with the idea of presenting a petition for the women's cause to the Congress, seeking encouragement from Mercy Warren, who had been one of the few women read and established in the male world of literature. Failing to receive support, Abigail left the idea; although the reasons why Warren failed to give the support remain a question for scholars even today. Chastised and ridiculed by her husband for an attempt to create "Despotism of the Petticoat", and being satisfied with his idea that women rule men through their seductive powers, Abigail accepted John Adams's explanations and temporarily confined herself to the contentment with division of the world into two separate spheres. Only a decade later, as Schlosser acutely points out, the change in her rhetoric was drastic:

> Government of States and Kingdoms, tho God knows badly enough managed, I am willing should be solely administered by the Lords of the Creation. I should contend only for domestick government, and think that best administered by the female.[10]

By using the "fair sex" ideology as a pretext, the division into spheres of influence meant acceptance that the sole power lay once again in the hands of the man, since by directing the woman, he indirectly directed everything else. Abigail's supposition that men will seek to usurp power to rule women was confirmed. Whether that confirmation was the result of pragmatism and the realization that her existence and reputation was absolutely connected to that of her husband, or of strong emotions related to missing her husband (who was away from home most of the time, wrote very little, briefly or chiefly for pragmatic reasons, and was deaf to her pleas to return home during her pregnancy, for example) is open to question.

[9] Schloesser 122-123.
[10] Schlosser 114.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that even if Abigail had had feminist inclinations, she lost them with time.

There were, nevertheless, women who did vote in the era. In New Jersey, immediately after 1776 when the state constitution's suffrage requirements included all "free inhabitants" meeting property requirements, women with property took advantage until the state legislature ended women's voting in 1807. However, it was once again limited to property and nothing near to the universal suffrage of both sexes, a reality that would not be available to the whole of the US until 1920.

Another way of looking at the era is from the male perspective. The revolution with a mixture of Enlightenment thought and an attempt to establish some type of status quo had to consider women's role and position. This can be seen in the debates and correspondence of political representatives such as John Adams or Thomas Jefferson. Adams, as has been mentioned, chastised his wife for her ideas on women's rights and used the argument Margaret Fuller would contradict later, that men are influenced by their wives and thus are able to represent female needs without women's needing to participate in politics. On the other hand, his arguments were represented differently to his colleagues and his reasons for maintaining power spring from his prejudice and rooted belief that only white men with property should remain in power. Adam's letter to Sullivan explicitly states that any alterations in the qualification of voters would "confound and destroy all Distinctions, and prostrate all Ranks to one common Levell."[11] Sclosser summarizes this belief as the fact "racial, ethnic, gender and class hierarchy needed to be preserved against claims of equality."[12]

[11] Quoted in Schlosser 127.
[12] Schlosser 127.

The attitudes of Jefferson regarding women's position are not too different from those of Adams. For example, even after the Revolution, in his letter from 1818 to Nathaniel Burwell, Thomas Jefferson states "A plan of female education has never been a subject of systematic contemplation with me."[13] In fact, he states that the education of his daughters was only to "enable them, when become mothers, to educate their own daughters, and even to direct the course of sons, should their fathers be lost, or incapable, or inattentive."[14] It is thus clear that Jefferson, like most men in his era, had no interest in extending any rights of equality to women; education of the women was to be limited to that concerning household economy and a few amusements, which "for a female, are dancing, drawing, and music"[15] -- and even these amusements were to be strictly circumscribed since, for example, no lady was to dance after marriage for Jefferson considered this rule "founded in solid physical reasons, gestation and nursing leaving little time to a married lady when this exercise can be either safe or innocent."[16] Thus, limitations in connection to virtue are already defined by the male perception. In addition, the theory that women's domestic sphere was not subordinate to the men's sphere, but that they were their equal, fails; and Lewis' theory suggests that the reasons were that: "Rather republicanism demanded virtue of women because Americans recognized that women were intimately connected to men. Women were to serve an instrumental purpose for social ends largely determined by men."[17]

The division into the male and female spheres as a pretext for men remaining in power was one way of evading male loss of control and superiority. The main argument was not a social concern for women as such but the importance of balancing state ideology and not losing women's submissiveness without contradicting Protestant religious principles

[13] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to Nathaniel Burwell, Esq.," *Norton Anthology of American Literature Volume* 1, ed. Ronald Gottesman, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 524-525.
[14] Jefferson 525.
[15] Jefferson 525.
[16] Jefferson 526.
[17] Jan Lewis quoted in Pauline Schloesser, *Fair Sex : White Women and Racial Patriarchy in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 18.

that despised idleness. This may be seen in the ideas of the founder of a new pattern of education for women, Dr. Benjamin Rush, speaking to a gathering in 1787. He says:

> the equal share a that every citizen has in the liberty, and the equal share he may have in the government of our country, make it necessary that our ladies should be qualified to a certain degree by a peculiar and suitable education, to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government.[18]

His idea for an amelioration of women's position is driven by a practical necessity for rearing the future generation, notably that of men. (This necessity may partly also be the result of the Revolutionary War, which had forced many women to remain alone to do all the men's work since men were fighting, and left many widowed thereafter, and which showed that lack of women's education had prevented many women from being able to educate their children according to the then-prescribed standard.) The need for improvement is visible, but although equality is a term used, its understanding is different since a women's position remains inferior as her education should only be improved "to a certain degree". Thus, although details of what should be taught or not may differ in Rush's and Jefferson's views (for example, Jefferson considered drawing a useful amusement whilst Rush discarded it as a waste of time); the general ideology to emerge into the cult of "republican motherhood" remained the same. In fact, it may be argued that this view prevailed from the Revolutionary era until (and even beyond) the Civil War. This would then confirm the view of Joyce W. Warren, a historian and English teacher at the City University of New York, who claims in her study of women in the 19th century: "Perhaps the most significant aspect of women's status in nineteenth-century America was their

[18] Benjamin Rush, *Thoughts on Female Education* (Philadelphia: Prichard and Gall, 1787) 6-7.

powerlessness which concerned women of all classes and in all regions of the country."[19] However, she asserts that justification of these restrictions through use of the conventional image of the lady was confined primarily to urban middle-class and upper-class women. In other classes, the restrictions were valorized differently.

Nevertheless, certain women did fight the prejudice of unequal opportunities of the sexes. For example, Judith Murray, whose essay "On the Equality of Sexes" written during the Revolution but published only in 1790 in the *Massachusetts* magazine, challenged the education system of her day. In poetic form, she writes on the sex inequalities:

> Yet cannot I their sentiments imbibe,
> Who this distinction to the sex ascribe,
> As if a woman's form must needs enrol,
> A weak, a servile, an inferiour soul;
> [..] But imbecility is still confin'd,
> And by the lordly sex to us consign'd;
> They rob us of the power t'improve,
> And then declare we only trifles love;[20]

The unequal status of women amounted to a submissive position, and the implied unequal opportunities for education--which lead men to consider themselves superior and patronize and ridicule women for loving trifles--drove Murray to question the traditionally-established notions. She argues that had women been given the same opportunities, they would be fit partners for men.

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[19]Joyce W. Warren, "The American Narcissus: Backgrounds of Culture". *The American Narcissus, Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1984) 9.

[20] Judith Sargent Murray, "On the Equality of Sexes", 26th April 2011 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murray/equality/equality.html>.

Also, Murray attacks the division of the society into spheres:

> Should it still be vociferated, "Your domestick employments are sufficient" – I would calmly ask, is it reasonable, that a candidate for immortality, for the joys of heaven, an intelligent being, who is to spend an eternity in contemplating the works of the Deity, should at present be so degraded, as to be allowed no other ideas, than those which are suggested by the mechanism of a pudding, or the sewing the seams of a garment?[21]

The confinement of women to domestic labor, Murray argues, does not allow for personal evolution, which contradicts religious principles of improvement and self-development of the being, which must never rest idle (an argument to be strongly debated in the Transcendentalist circle and considered fundamental for personalities such as Margaret Fuller). Murray thus uses religious ideology, which was open to both sexes, to question the established order and division. She was a Universalist, and it may be argued that she influenced the church, in which many of the key positions, including those of ministers came to be held by women during the 19th century. (Official Universalist approval of ordaining women in the church came only in 1863, one of the earliest such endorsements.) Furthermore, Murray discards any ideas of male superiority "Yes, ye lordly, ye haughty sex, our souls are by nature *equal* to yours; the same breath of God animates, enlivens, and invigorates us; and that we are not fallen lower than yourselves."[22] By referring to the supremacy of God and the untouchable fact that all souls were equal, Murray asserts men cannot be superior to women. In addition, she attacks the established premises of the church, which considered Eve solely responsible for the banishment from Paradise, and reminds men they cannot be superior since they are no less guilty for having committed the original

[21] Murray 26th April 2011 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murray/equality/equality.html>.
[22] Murray 26th April 2011 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murray/equality/equality.html>.

sin themselves too. Also, she also rejects claims men are superior on intellectual grounds since she believes history is full of naturally gifted men and women. Finally, she discards purely biological reasons for men's superiority, as she says "occular demonstration evinceth, that there are many robust masculine ladies, and effeminate gentleman." [23] Murray also rejects the use of such arguments because she believes they would lead to disputes on the assumptions of natural impartiality. This would mean that if the superiority of strength were given to man, then intellectual superiority would be given to a woman. She, therefore, argues that both sexes are equal.

Furthermore, Murray herself proved the point in 1795 and 1796, when her "plays were performed at the Boston Theatre on Federal Street making her the first American—male or female—to be so honored." [24] In addition, her book of essays and plays called *The Gleaner* (1798), which was bought by many prominent figures of the day, praises the new republic and discusses a wider range of subjects and equality on a broader scale. It also made Murray the first woman to self-publish a book.[25] In the book, Murray became a champion of women's equality with men and concentrated on subjects of citizenship, education and economic independence, and her religious beliefs. In fact, concerning her religious views, as early as 1782 "Judith published a Universalist catechism that is today considered the earliest writing by an American Universalist woman. The pamphlet included Judith's first public assertion of male and female equality, a hallmark of Universalism." *The Gleaner* thus only confirmed her previous views stating that:

> The idea of the incapability of women is ... totally inadmissible.... To argue against facts, is indeed contending with both wind and tide; and, borne down by

[23] Murray 26th April 2011 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/murray/equality/equality.html>.
[24] The biography of Judith Sargent Murray, 27th April 2011 < http://www.jsmsociety.com/Biography.html>.
[25] Judith Sargent Murray, 27th April 2011 <http://www.jsmsociety.com/>

> accumulating examples, conviction of the utility of the present plans will pervade the public mind, and not a dissenting voice will be heard.[26]

Murray believed in women's abilities and she asserted again and again that equality was inherent to the human and that given equal opportunities, women would be able to change the world. She said "I may be accused of enthusiasm; but such is my confidence in THE SEX, that I expect to see our young women forming a new era in female history."[27] Her enthusiastic expectations, however, were to take much longer to find realization than she believed. Nevertheless, the copies she made of her correspondence (believed lost, rediscovered in 1984, and now preserved on microfilm by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History) have provided several historians useful source material for the depiction and situation of women in the era.

The education of women was limited to the rich, and the divided spheres together with the philosophy asserted by Rousseau on women's education prevailed. As Rousseau stated:

> The whole education of women ought to be relative to men. To please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honored by them, to educate them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, and to make life sweet and agreeable to them – these are the duties of women at all times, and what should be taught them from their infancy.[28]

The whole notion thus confirmed the idea of women's inferiority and prevailed in all the areas of society, although few exceptional women challenged certain claims. A new

[26] The biography of Judith Sargent Murray, 27th April 2011 < http://www.jsmsociety.com/Biography.html>.
[27] Judith Sargent Murray, "The Gleaner Contemplates the Future Prospects of Women in this "Enlightened Age" 1978," 27th April 2011 <http://pages.uoregon.edu/mjdennis/courses/history_456_murray3.htm>.
[28] Jean-Jaques Rousseau, *L' Emile or A Treatise on Education,* ed. W. H. Payne (New York and London, 1906) 263. Also quoted in Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 22.

construction was to come only with a change in circumstances, an alteration that would produce a new conceptual juxtaposition of "ladies" and "working women". In fact, the initial drive for equal education, as the scholar Flexner asserts, was not to be available:

> to the number and kind of women able to take advantage of it, until westward expansion and the beginnings of industrial production outside the home began to affect the whole social structure of the young nation.[29]

The expansion to the western territories and the establishment of the mills challenged the established concept of the new republic and was to produce solid ground for the suffrage movement. The change in the social structure brought about a new consciousness and women began to perceive and demand more than they had previously been willing to accept.

2.2 Tocqueville's Depiction of American Women

In his book *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville states "if someone were to ask me what I think is primarily responsible for the singular prosperity and growing power of this people, I would answer that it is the superiority of their women."[30] The respect with which de Tocqueville depicts women may appear very pleasing and is full of admiration but de Tocqueville is also able to see the sacrifice behind this superiority. His understanding of women's superiority is their self-awareness and acceptance of their own fate in a world strictly divided into the spheres of male and female. He accurately describes this in the way girls are raised, how they are perceived by their counterparts and in the way equality is understood.

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[29] Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 16.

[30] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated by Arthur Godhammer (New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2004) 708.

Tocqueville perceives an American woman as "full of confidence in her own strength, and her confidence seems to be shared by everyone around her."[31] Thus, the American girl is raised in a different manner than a European one, and her self-awareness is developed to a higher degree. In addition, it is apparent that there is encouragement to the development of a female mind in the society. Tocqueville states that an upbringing based on reason, which does "not rely on religion alone to defend a woman's virtue"[32], is a very wise choice despite the fact it "tends to develop judgment at the expense of imagination, and to make women respectable and cold rather than tender wives and amiable companions of men."[33] Nevertheless, he does not see the woman's self-development as in opposition to femininity, which is quite interesting given the notions of a naïve soul and timidity as part of the norm of femininity in Europe.

In fact, Tocqueville is able to depict and admire the inner strength of the women and sees their upbringing and independence as a source of maintaining a femininity of the spirit. This accounts for the fact that in the American woman "we can still divine the young girl in the features of the wife. Her role has changed, her habits are different, but her spirit is the same."[34] Thus, due to her learned independence the woman is able to bear severe hardships in extreme conditions and in the wilderness, which Tocqueville describes in some of the accounts of his travels. In addition, Lerner argues, in conjunction with Tocqueville, that this freedom can be seen through the notion of freedom of marriage choice. Lerner argues that:

[31] Tocqueville Godhammer 692.
[32] Tocqueville Godhammer 694.
[33] Tocqueville Godhammer 694.
[34] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* translated by George Lawrence, ed. P. Mayer and Max Lerner (New York: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1966) 697.

to women for the first time in Western history the chance to develop a self-reliant grace without losing their femininity, and without becoming those George Sands [and] de Staels of whom Tocqueville had something of a dread.[35]

Such an attainment is extraordinary, and, indeed, it is self-reliance which aids women to attain personal development and maintain their spiritual independence. However, it is also one that is limited by the masculine world and produces itself in the accepted "fair sex" ideology and legal bondage to the husband. Therefore, the woman's only free choice remains her choice of marriage, after which "she forfeits her independence forever."[36] Tocqueville is much aware of this strict division, for he notes "an inexorable public opinion reigns, carefully confining women within the restricted circle of domestic interests and duties prohibiting them from venturing outside."[37] The strict rules providing the area of dominance are thus defined and the woman is taught in her upbringing to adapt and accept them. Tocqueville attributes these acts of "self-denial and constant sacrifice of pleasure to business" to the American "religious beliefs and their industrial habits"[38]. In fact, this depiction remains true of Americans in stereotypes today, especially in expressions that "Americans live to work and do not work to live", and religious beliefs still remain strong (although the self-denial is not restricted to the sex but to the spirit of each individual).

Tocqueville, although sensible to the sacrifice of the women, appears to admire and approve of the division of the sexes. This is because he believes the European idea that claims "to make man and woman into creatures not only equal but alike [..] degrades them

[35] Tocqueville Lerner xxvi.
[36] Tocqueville Lerner 695.
[37] Tocqueville Lerner 695.
[38] Tocqueville Lerner 695.

both."[39] Tocqueville can be credited with describing American society as being an equality of separation between the sexes. He writes:

> No country in the world has been more persistent than America in tracing clearly separated lines of action for the two sexes or in wanting both to proceed at an equal pace but along two permanently different paths. [40]

This observation confirms the desire of men to leave women out of politics and accounts for their excuse to strictly set the lines. Although such an observation confirms the views of historians, such as Mary Beth Norton, that post-revolutionary society "had at last formally recognized women's work as valuable"[41], it is only a partial truth. Tocqueville does state that in America, men "give evidence of the esteem in which they hold"[42] for women, unlike Europe, where men "look upon them as seductive but incomplete beings."[43] However, he clearly points out that in America, "the natural leader of the conjugal association was man [..] they [Americans – most notably men] did not deny him the right to direct his helpmate."[44] Thus, although equality may appear formal in terms of assigning different roles to the sexes, it leaves the man as its sole conductor. This may be seen in the general attitudes of the men towards women's education, limited to their further role for raising children, and the lack of any set of legal or formal rights, with the only law protecting women being that in the case of rape, one of the few crimes punishable by death (although there is no mention of punishment for rape within marriage).

[39] Tocqueville Lerner 705.
[40] Tocqueville Lerner 706.
[41] Norton, quoted in Pauline Schloesser, *Fair Sex: White Women and Racial Patriarchy in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2002) 18.
[42] Tocqueville Lerner 707.
[43] Tocqueville 707.
[44] Tocqueville Lerner 706.

However, Tocqueville believes women accept this division of spheres with pride or that it "was the sentiment expressed by the most virtuous of them"[45] by which he asserts his own belief that such a division is desirable. Nevertheless, despite his perception of American morality being derived from the Puritans and

> taken mainly from the after-dinner conversations with his Boston friends, rather than from the sort of view of American sexual behavior that one gets in reading sexual reformers of Jacksonian America [..][and failure] to suggest either the breakdown or patterned evasion of moral codes, or the heavy toll of mental conflict and anguish in the American personality[46]

Tocqueville was able to establish the mental position of women whose ascribed status was derived from the generally accepted notions within society. Thus, although there may have been earlier attempts of women such as Abigail Adams or Mercy Otis Warren to demand some form of rights for women, they were not really feminist because they decided to accept and comply with the "fair sex" ideology. Also, although the work of Mary Wollstonecraft was read in England and America, most early feminists distanced themselves from her because of her opinions on sexuality and her scandalous reputation, particularly in regards to her having had an illegitimate daughter. Furthermore, the position of women was discussed, but this was limited to literature and theatre; and the general view today is that women still accepted the division lines set by the society. Organizations on behalf of women's rights were only beginning to emerge, going hand in hand with other movements such as the Temperance movement and particularly Abolitionism. It is therefore interesting to note Max Lerner's observations on Tocqueville that:

[45] Tocqueville Lerner 706.
[46] Tocqueville Lerner xxvi.

Above all, he understood the nature of the American woman, and he saw that a rivalry with the American male (such as took place in the feminist revolutions which started in his day) would not resolve the problem of her identity as a woman: it could be resolved only by balancing her intellectual vigor and independence with a basic femininity. "As a result American women, who are often manly in their intelligence and in their energy, usually preserve delicacy of appearance, and always have the manners of women, though they sometimes show the hearts and minds of men." This description of the American woman of the 1830's has, after all the movements of liberation, become more applicable today than ever in the intervening time.[47]

Thus, Lerner's observation depicts Tocqueville as seeing beyond his time because he saw American women as revolutionaries in their intellectual capacities but balanced by their determined femininity. It is interesting that Lerner, in 1966, sees in Tocqueville a potential precedent for resolving the crisis of a woman's identity and possibly an answer to the crisis of women that Betty Friedan describes in her book *The Feminine Mystique* as "a problem that has no name." This problem describes the discontent of 1960s women with their life. Friedan states that "after 1920, feminism was dead history. It ended as a vital movement in America with the winning of that final right: the vote."[48] Thus, with the battles for formal and legal equality with men having ended, women have nothing to fight against--and here Lerner's observation of an identity crisis as not an external battle with men but an internal one seems fit. Nevertheless, the idea of femininity balanced by intellectual vigor is shallow, and as Betty Friedan states, needs to be examined on the basis of the myth created about women and the myth they choose to believe about themselves.

[47]Tocqueville Lerner xxvii.
[48] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton &Company Inc., 1963) 100.

However, with the perspective of time, it is possible to see that Tocqueville's admiration for the Americans' seeing the sexes as different rather than alike may illuminate a more sober perception, contrasting in particular with the beginnings of the modern day third wave feminism, which aims to see the sexes equal on all grounds but fails to account for inequalities based on physical differences.[49] Nevertheless, Tocqueville's approval of limiting the spheres remains as quite a narrow perception for a modern-day person.

In conclusion, the observations of Tocqueville remain a useful source of information and male perception of the American female world, surviving time and providing information on the mental constraints of liberty. In addition, they also provide an instructive analysis of the society's division into two separate spheres, which continued to be accepted in America unconsciously even after many formal rights were granted to women with universal suffrage in 1920.

[49] See Michael Levin's *Feminism and Freedom*, which depicts various discrepancies in the demands of feminists on the basis of equality, in for example, sports. It shows how feminism fails to see the effects that positive discrimination may have on the male population. Also, note other areas, like marriage where arguments appear only one-sided and do not provide and leave room for an alternative side of argument.

3. Women in Literature and Theatre

3.1 Women in the Theatre

Theatre has always been known as an arena for expression. It is a means of reflecting reality in art, but also of making the use of the double play of art within art – the art of the drama and the art of acting. Tocqueville, in his depiction of the Americans, suggests "For a foretaste of what the literature of a people making the transition to democracy will be like, study its theater."[1] This suggests the close link of the drama and acting with literature. The first American plays in the Revolutionary era were those of Mercy Otis Warren, the first female playwright, whose plays were anti-British and anti-Loyalist and are mainly farce where the women comply with the stereotypes of gossipers. Her plays complied with the model outlined by Tocqueville because she produced plays that were contemporary and reflected the political situation of the era. Nevertheless, as Tocqueville states, Americans preferred to see the plays rather than read them, and the stage was seen to offer to society not the search for "pleasures of the intellect" but rather "intense emotions of the heart."[2] Thus, the aim of the theatre was to create emotions and capture the audience.

This knowledge was exploited by actresses in the different fields of the theatre ranging from comedy to tragedy and vaudeville. The comedy was, nevertheless, believed to be the masculine sphere and "women were still viewed largely as targets rather than creators of comedy."[3] It was in the late nineteenth century, with Canadian actresses like Marie Dressler and May Irvin who enjoyed great fame, that the American stage began to change and influence the social spheres since these actresses asserted a new dimension to comedy. They explored new ways of presenting comedy and created a demand for female comedians

[1] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* translated by Arthur Godhammer (New York: Penguin Putman Inc., 2004) 563.
[2] Tocqueville 566.
[3] Quoted in Susan A. Glenn, *Female Spectacle: Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000) 41.

since they revealed to Americans that women can be funny and amusing too. In the article "The Emancipation of 'The Rib'" in 1911 Helen Rowland states that:

> woman now shares equal honors with man in seeing a joke and sometimes she sees it first, [this] has done more to bring about the equality of the sexes and their mutual understanding than anything else, from coeducation to the suffrage movement.[4]

The fact the woman became a man's partner in humorous advances raised equality in one previously male-dominated area. The fact the audience wanted intense emotions produced was exploited by the vaudeville singers, the particular style of Eva Tanguay who became popular for her eccentric and excessive movement when she sang. People were not so interested in what she sang but how she did it, and one reviewer described her as "that strange creature who lacks a voice but possesses an aggressive individuality that captures her audience."[5] In tragedy, women challenged the society by taking on male roles such as that of Hamlet, which was taken on by, for example, Charlotte Cushman in 1851; but this idea started to deteriorate at the turn of the century. Such performances, nevertheless, allowed women freedom of dress – they could wear more comfortable clothes and try on the male dress. This effectively led to the idea of dress reform, which was tried in the United States with the introduction of the Bloomer dress. However, though the dress was advocated by the suffragists, the press ridiculed it, and the idea failed miserable. Still, the actresses did assert an influence on women, calling for the abolition of the extremely tightly tied corsets.

Since theatre was a place of self-expression, women were free to find ways of expressing themselves and encouraged to find new identities. One woman who made a revolutionary effect on American women was the French actress Sarah Bernhardt. Her influence lasted well into the 1960s and may be seen in the remark "Don't be such a Sarah

[4] Glenn 44.
[5] Glenn 66.

Bernhardt! or Don't pull such a Sarah Bernhardt!" that was used to describe excesses in emotional behavior among young women.[6] The manner of her self-presentation became iconic for self-publicity and her behavior allowed women to experiment in their own self-presentation. Such experimentation was to serve the next century as well since it challenged the notions of the 1960s and 1970s on subjects of "confinement in the family, dependence and lack of identity."[7] The subjects that trapped women in certain roles could always look to theatre for an inspiration and self-reflection. Thus, theatre was always able to reflect upon the problems of all types of feminism where "The New Feminism emphasizes the importance of the 'women's point of view,' [and] the Old Feminism believes in the primary importance of the human being." [8] Women in the theatre were, therefore, able to accomplish both without necessarily being concerned in what era issues were being raised.

In addition, publicity allowed actresses to use their fame to advocate certain subjects. The range of these could vary as the industry was exploited by various groups such as the suffragists to present their right to the vote. If a famous person was associated with their organization, their cause was likely to become more plausible. In fact, this type of publicity may be seen as a predecessor of the advertisements on TV today, the development of the cult of the idol, and an important technique in the consumer culture. Another advantage of actresses was the ability to express things that sprang either from experience and beliefs or as a means of self-promotion. Fanny Kemble, a famous British actress who married an American, Pierce Butler, is one of the examples of women who saw the horrors of slavery and became an ardent antislavery activist upon her return to England and eventual divorce from her husband. Her *Journal of A Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*,

[6] Quoted in Glenn 1.
[7] Sheila Rowbotham, *The Past Is Before Us Feminism in Action Since the 1960s* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989) 3.
[8] Winifred Holtby, "Feminism Divided" in *Modern Feminisms,* ed. Maggie Humm (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) 42.

published in 1863, is a record of all the crimes of slavery she witnessed, and, because of her fame, it allowed her to press the cause in England.

In addition, the actress had a means of supporting herself, and actresses "were among the few working women able to command salaries as high as, and often higher than their male counterparts."[9] Thus, acting was one of the best means of self-reliance in a world of divided spheres where the taboos would eventually slowly begin to break. It remained a sphere untouched by the former division of spheres. The British playwright Israel Zangwill described the stage as

> "the sphere which women adorn equally with men, if not indeed with superior luster." To tell the actress that place was in the home, he observed "would scarcely occur even to the most bigoted defenders of the hearth."[10]

Therefore, the actress had a privilege in comparison to other women in terms of personal freedom, and she formed the exception to the rule.

Another advantage of being an actress was the possibility to act out what would otherwise be forbidden. "In the latter part of the nineteenth century the theatre was seen to be a radical and influential place. Its gurus might be male but its disciples were often female."[11] Thus Ibsen and Shaw's place allowed women to act as New Women of the era - ridiculing, experiencing, expressing, and questioning the new roles. Many plays challenged convention, and the performance of these roles added a specific meaning to its presentation, which could either be a rejection or an acceptance. However, this also had a disadvantage, because a woman could be associated with a role she performed in her real life, too.

[9] Glenn 135.
[10] Glenn 135.
[11] Viv Gardner "Introduction," *The New Woman and Her Sisters Feminism and Theatre 1850-1914,* ed. Viv Gardner and Susan Rutherford (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf,1992) 7.

The images of literature were often projected into a dramatic form, and sensual literature was allowed to be experimented with, as well as conventional images. In fact, with the expansion westward, the model of the lady was challenged, and theatre aimed to depict any novelties. If the symbol of the town was a rebellious woman with latchkeys and cigarettes, the image of the western woman was a strong-minded woman of physical strength with a gun. One of the newly formed images can be found in David Belasco's *The Girl of the Golden West* from 1905. The story depicts an independent woman who is admired by the miners and working men, a woman of virtue yet the owner of a saloon, a capable woman without fear who is able to use a gun and speak in the language of the male community. She falls in love with a bandit whose identity is revealed to her by the sheriff. The sheriff shoots at the bandit and wounds him. The girl hides him, but he is found; yet since the sheriff is interested in marrying her, she proposes to play cards with him--the deal being that if she wins the bandit is hers, if not she is to accept marriage to the sheriff. During the game she pretends to faint and shrewdly cheats the sheriff to win in cards; in the end she is helped by the miners and escapes with the bandit. The story thus appeals to the public in that it breaks the conventions – the women is tough-minded and independent, very intelligent, shrewd and capable, but still a woman for her ability to love and prepared for sacrifice to save the man she loves. Thus the convention is broken but the all-conquering image of love prevails.

Interestingly, the theater allowed women to develop in many ways, even in terms of business, and many women became entrepreneurs or owners in the theatre industry. However, plays were put under surveillance, and, as Tocqueville justly remarks:

> Americans whose laws authorize freedom and even license of speech in all matters, have nevertheless imposed a kind of censorship on dramatic authors. Plays can be performed only when town officials will allow. [12]

There was development with time from 1752 when William Dunlop established the theatre as such in America, but censorship and laws regarding censorship of a limited kind were imposed on theatre as one of the few institutions from the start.

In conclusion, the theatre served as a living ground for feminism, since it provided women with independence not available in other circles of the society. The actresses were able to gain economic independence, as well as social and political equality, on the stage. Many notions in society could be challenged through the theatre, and in particular women's roles, depictions, and image. The theatre provided space for self-development and self-expression, and allowed actresses to transmit this energy. An actress was able to promote improvements such as dress reform, and her personality could serve to publicize issues such as women's rights or abolitionism.

3.2 Female Writers

The literature of the antebellum era may be classed in several ways. The generally accepted view is that this period was full of literature associated with the "The Cult of True Womanhood" (also known as the "Cult of Domesticity"), an ideal placed upon nineteenth-century women of how they should conduct their lives. The outline of these criteria may be seen in the historian Barbara Welter's article, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860", which originally appeared in *American Quarterly* in 1966. In her study, Welter identifies four characteristics that a True Woman – a lady – should have exhibited and mastered with ease:

[12] Tocqueville 567.

domesticity, piety, purity, and submissiveness.[13] Despite the lack of agreement over what woman's proper role should be, the ideal of "True Womanhood" or "separate spheres" appears to have been a pervasive paradigm in antebellum America, especially in middle-class New England.[14] However, in reality, it was applied almost exclusively to urban middle-class or upper-class women. The belief thus sprang up that most of the literature of the era was dedicated to this subject. This is visible in the number of titles and various "genres" that began to appear, such as cook books, marriage and childbirth books, various women's magazines on etiquette, and books "on moral guidance such as *The Ladies' Parlor Companion, The Young Lady's Book, Whisper to a Bride, Women of Worth: A book for girls, The Mother's Assistant and Young Lady's Friend."*[15] The most exquisite is perhaps a much later work from the 1860s, that of Catherine Beecher, the work named *The American Woman's Home* (1869), which blended the useful and the domestic and gave advice on all types of subjects, ranging from decoration of the house to technical advice on ventilation.

Due to the division of the male and female spheres in life, it came to be believed that:

By stressing woman's motherly role, popular literature validated a widening gap between distinct male and female spheres. Some critics claim that this literature degenerated into bathos and narcissism; they argue that it was a "feminized," mawkish literature that set the stage for the literary rebellions of such tough-minded authors as Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville. Others argue that popular women's literature was a more positive force: even though it emphasized woman's domestic and religious roles, it

[13] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860" [1966], *US History,* 19 Dec. 2010, <http://www.pinzler.com/ushistory/cultwo.html>.
[14] Saulsbury, Rebecca, "Cult of True Womanhood, 1820 – 1900", *Literary Encyclopedia,* 19 Dec. 2010, <http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=242>.
[15] *The New Woman and Her Sisters Feminism and Theatre 1850-1914,* ed. Viv Gardner and Susan Rutherford (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) 41.

illustrated her "sentimental power" and therefore was a document of ennoblement rather than degradation.[16]

The critics of this era may, therefore, be divided into two groups. Nevertheless, the historian and literary critic David S. Reynolds has a different point of view. He believes this standard view of assessing literature of the era:

> is misleading and simplistic. From a quantitative standpoint, it overestimates the popularity of women's literature. The claim that women's fiction began as a relatively sparse genre and then by midcentury assumed dominance of the popular scene has no basis.[17]

Reynolds, through statistics, proves that only the 1784-1810 period had an almost equal proportion of male and female writers, and provides factual evidence that for the whole 1776-1860 period, adventurous volumes by American authors (57%) exceeded religious and sentimental volumes (22%).[18] Reynolds's figures reveal that the general concept of the way literature was evaluated is in contrast to reality and by providing new evidence Reynolds indirectly challenges one to make a new approach to analyzing the cannons. Furthermore, he proves there was a diversity of female roles and their representations and claims there was "no single kind of literature written by either sex [..] debates about women's issues were confined to neither kind of popular literature."[19] Thus, literature allowed for the reflection of the political and social spheres in literary forms, and female characters often directly depicted the behavior or image the given author wanted to convey. Such depictions ranged enormously. The androgynous stereotype, which Reynolds calls "the adventure feminist,"[20]

[16] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 338.
[17] Reynolds 338.
[18] Reynolds 338.
[19] Reynolds 338.
[20] Reynolds 339.

reflected the pioneers and women that set on the conquest of the West, where circumstances for life were hard and demanded of women enormous courage as well as physical labor in many cases. The admiration of women may be seen in 'serious literature' - the notes of travels and reflections of Tocqueville in his *Democracy in America*, as had been discussed, but also in popular literature, which with the Western expansion created the idea of the frontier, adventure, and conquest, but also sketches and pieces that discussed female dilemmas. The depiction of the heroines would differ; some like Mary Hallock Foote, described tensions between East and West as well as between careers and married life. For example, in the "Fate of a Voice" she depicts a woman who makes a choice, torn between love and a career. The woman's final fate is described in the following manner:

> In that vague and rapidly lessening region known as the frontier, there disappeared, a few years ago, a woman's voice. A soprano with a wonderful mezzo quality [..] threw away a charming career, just at its outset, and went with a husband – not anybody in particular. [21]

Such stories may not be feminist in outcome, but they raise the question of female dilemmas and describe women making their own choices. They may be interpreted as moral in that the woman joins her husband at the cost of self-sacrifice and her career or as natural effects of a woman's choice to marry rather than pursue a career.

The differences between the East and the West may be seen in other aspects, as well. For example, while the level of violence had to be tolerated in the East, as a woman had no legal protection from a brutal husband, the West viewed these laws differently, as Foote says:

[21] Mary Hallock Foote, "Fate of a Voice," *Nineteenth Century American Women Writers,* ed. Karen L. Kilcup (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) 358-359.

To quote a description, given in Hibernian good faith, of a young man at large with the murder of his father – in defense of his mother, it is claimed – on his head, "He is a perfect gentleman if he isn't crossed.[22]

The defense of the weaker and the protection of women, even if it meant somebody's murder or the commitment of a crime that sprang from the need to survive - these were not considered as violations of the law in the West. In addition, the women of the West challenged the stereotype of the "lady". Many novels feature women on an equal footing with men, finding models in existing personalities. Furthermore, it was not only the wives of men who had decided to become pioneers that came to the area; various records are kept of strong emancipated women who set up their own businesses.

Another part of literature that became popular was the genre of travelogues. In fact, travelling had led to the invention of the guidebook in the USA in 1822, but many writers preferred to write depictions of areas and their sentiments rather than provide the services of guidebooks. Travelogues became parts of regular contributions to magazines, an industry that started in Philadelphia in 1741 and grew to be one of the popular means of obtaining information of all kinds. Margaret Fuller, who though she worked mainly for *the Dial*, which was a small circulation periodical read in elite circles,[23]wrote one of her major works, *The Summer on the Lakes* (1844) as a travelogue, depicting the frontier and the treatment of Native Americans and women to be found there, misinterpreting, unfortunately, in her narrative, some cultural points and the positions women held in Native American society.

The position of women was a theme in various contexts. Apart from the genres of literature, through which the woman's position in society was depicted, it is possible to

[22] Mary Hallock Foote, "Pictures of the Far West III The Seriff's Posse," *Nineteenth Century American Women Writers,* ed. Karen L. Kilcup (Cambridge, MA : Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) 361.
[23] For more information on magazines and the development of the industry see Haven, Heather A. *Antebellum Literary Culture and the evolution of American magazines.* New York: Columbia University, 2004.

analyze various authors and their own relationship to their fictional characters. In *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), Maria Edgeworth discusses female authorship and argues women have the same talent as men and may find praise for good talent. She even claims that girls are superior to boys in writing. Her final conclusion, however, is that women are to be wives and mothers. Her fiction reflects this belief, although Edgeworth herself never married or had any children.

Various perceptions of women began to emerge and their roles and depiction in literature became complex. In fact, it became impossible to find a strictly typical character. Reynolds describes the era of antebellum literature as a "time of extreme self-consciousness about the proliferation of varied women's roles in American culture."[24] Traditional notions of the "old maid" were challenged by writers such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Margaret Fuller, and Louisa May Alcott, who reinterpreted the "old maid" role as "a symbol of womanly self-reliance."[25] There was also a shared belief that a woman had the moral power to change the "fallen" man. This moral power was conceived in various ways - in sentimental novels portraying women in the role of the wife and redeemer, as a preacher and the conscience of good moral conduct, and, in the Civil War era, as a nurse and savior. The moral power of the woman is also discussed in Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, which is one of the most important writings depicting women's situation in the era. Women's moral power also became an integral part of the literature of "women's wrongs", a popular theme which was taken up by many feminist writers who became involved in the suffrage movement. The woman was a victim of a brutal husband, generally a drunkard – this both inspired and reflected much of the work done by the temperance movement. In fact, as Reynolds point out:

[24] Reynolds 412.
[25] Reynolds 349.

The literature of women's wrongs emerged between 1832 and 1848 in dark writings connected with key reform movements--antiprostitution, antiseduction, temperance, antislavery--which frequently portrayed the miseries of American women, usually working-class women brutalized by dissolute men or exploited in the marketplace. Women's reform work and its accompanying literature produced a dialectical mixture of growing independence and perceived injustice, of women's consciousness of new power and also the perception of widespread suffering and exploitation. This dialectical combination of opposite sentiments, which burst forth in the mingled confidence and rage of the Seneca Falls convention, had been reflected in popular reform literature.[26]

As Reynolds makes clear, there was cross-fertilization between real life events and what was reflected in literature. A new consciousness was forming not only among the elite circles but also among common women--and in particular among working women, a new 'class' that was emerging. The depiction of suffering, together with the suppressed anger which began to be expressed, started to create a new movement.

Also, "women's literature" emerged in various magazines, newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets. These were sometimes aimed at a specific audience, for example, the *Dial* was a Transcendentalist magazine, rather reserved to the intellectual elite; while the *Lowell Offering* was dedicated to the mills and the factory environment, which chiefly employed women, particularly as they were a cheaper labor force. In fact, the seamstress became a literary symbol for a working woman of the era. Much of the literature on factory life was predominantly propaganda; but literature emerged which described certain aspects of the hard conditions of life in these places, such as Ariel Ivres Cummings's *The Factory Girl* (1847).

[26] Reynolds 351.

Genres also diversified with the gradual development of the suffrage movement, ranging from delivered speeches to magazine articles and fiction novels. One example of a writer involved in these diversifications is Fanny Fern, who turned to writing to support herself after the death of her first husband and a divorce from her second. She took on subjects such as women's rights, marriage, dress reform, and child abuse. Her article "A Word on the Other Side", for example, attacks the notion that men can use violent language and physical abuse in case of a dispute. She demands how such an assertion can be justified:

> Is it because her husband claims to be her intellectual superior? Is it because he is his wife's natural protector? Is it because an unblest marriage lot is more tolerable to her susceptible organization and monotonous life, than to his hardier nature relieved by out/door occupations? Is it because the thousand diversions which society winks at and excuses in his case, are stamped in hers as guilty and unhallowed? Is it because maternity has never gasped out in his hearing its sacred agony? Is it because no future wife is to mourn in that man's imitative boy his father's low standard of a husband's duty? [27]

Through the use of rhetorical questions, Fern has an effect on the reader that forces him/her to seek answers to the questions she asks. At the same time, she is able to convey to the reader the miserable conditions in which women are trapped by the customs and laws of the country. Fern's writing expresses the anger and indignation which became one typical mode of expression in the "women's wrongs" literature. As Linda Grasso states, the expression of anger is a strategy writers of the nineteenth century used to present a:

[27] Fanny Fern, "A Word on the Other Side," *Nineteenth Century American Women Writers,* ed. Karen L. Kilcup (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) 123.

> specifically gendered tradition of literary discontent that is shaped by two equally powerful sources: women's anger at exclusion from the failed promises of democratic America, and their inability to express that anger overtly.[28]

The fact that society did not allow women to express themselves completely is part of Fern's already-mentioned article. This objection was expressed even more fully in her fictional work *Ruth Hall*, which was a public revelation of certain autobiographical experiences in which a widow is finally able to sustain herself, and because of her talent for writing, to gain independence. The multi-faceted image of the writer in the novel serves to express many standards of female oppression. Firstly, the novel is important, as Jennifer Harris says, because it expresses how "women are not accorded the delicacy of treatment or respect that they should be in the male-dominated workplace."[29] Secondly, as Linda Grasso notes, it made leaders, such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, aware that "women are oppressed by a double standard of expression."[30] Exposure of this double standard allowed Stanton to draw parallels between the oppressed white woman and the slave and "by equating gender oppression with racial oppression, Stanton establishes a direct correlation between the validity of the slave's anger and that of the white woman's."[31] By using the language of the abolitionists, Stanton draws parallels between their frustration and that of women. (In fact, Stanton was a great orator, and it is worth noticing how she uses the various oratorical techniques of movements with which she associated herself, like Abolitionism or Temperance, and applies them to women's rights. For example, she used temperance language to promote divorce laws.) By searching for ways to express their anger, women like Fanny Fern may be seen to be in quest of their free self-expression. Another such writer

[28] Linda M.Grasso, *The Artistry of Anger: black and white women's literature in America, 1820-1860* (London : University of Carolina Press, 2002) 4-5.
[29] Jennifer Harris, "Marketplace Transactions and Sentimental Currencies in Fanny Fern's "Ruth Hall". American Transcendental Quarterly Vol 20, Issue 1, March 2006. pp. 343–59 4 October 2010.
[30] Grasso 139.
[31] Grasso 139-140.

was Louisa May Alcott, most famous for her book *Little Women*. She once said "I am angry nearly every day of my life, but I have learned not to show it; and I still try to hope not to feel it, though it may take me another forty years to do it."[32] The need to ventilate vexation, as well as enjoyment, can be found in writing. However, as Gilbert and Gubar state:

> "what [..] history suggests is that in patriarchal culture, female speech and female 'presumption' -- that is, angry revolt against male domination-- are inextricably linked and inevitably daemonic."[33]

Thus, any form of writing would have been considered as improper behavior, and women were persuaded not to attempt it since it violated the male literary monopoly. Such an attitude could result only in resentment, fear, anger, or their combination. The anger to express this discontent may have been the reason that led Alcott "to create a secret identity wherein she could express her angry revolt; that identity was A.M. Barnard (Alcott's pseudonym) and Barnard's *femmes fatales*."[34] Indeed, it may be argued that many female writers either published anonymously or under pseudonyms to evade public prejudice, and also to be taken seriously by the male literary world.

The diverse genres that produced many types of heroines in the antebellum era are associated with many female writers' names, but in the founding period of the Republic we find very few, and most notably that of Mercy Otis Warren.

While often anonymously published, her work, the caricatures in her popular propaganda plays – the first written by an American woman – her forthright plea for a Bill of Rights, her

[32]May Alcott quotes 30th April 2011 < http://womenshistory.about.com/library/weekly/aa040599.htm>.
[33]Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U P, 1979) 35.
[34] Wells, Kim. Domestic Goddesses. August 23, 1999, 30th April 2011 <http://www.womenwriters.net/domesticgoddess/>.

poetry and her three-volume History immortalize Mrs. Warren as the Muse of the American Revolution.[35]

Warren, though she did not really challenge the fair sex ideology when she wrote her volumes of history on the American Revolution, became the first female historian of the US and argued for the equality of sexes on the basis of the intellect. She also praised another woman writer for her work – Phillis Wheatley, who became a champion herself. Not only was Phillis Wheatley the first African-American published poet but also the first African-American woman writer to be published.

The development of poetry can be seen in the prominent figure of Emily Dickinson, an anomaly in her era and one whose work Reynolds perceived as "the highest product of a rich literary moment, roughly between 1855 and 1865, that I call the American Women's Renaissance."[36] Although she published only seven poems in her lifetime and her first volume was not published until 1890, the verse often interrupted by lines served as a forerunner of the stream of consciousness and modernist writing in poetry. Her poetry is provocative, in particular, in its structure of dramatic pauses and in the way it conveys the importance of the play of language, a language detached from the empirical world to create its own meaning. The themes vary considerably, covering pain, suffering, love, marriage, religious beliefs, and even identity. One such poem is number 288 "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" Dickinson begins with an assertion "I'm Nobody! Who are you?/Are you – Nobody – Too?"[37] The idea of identification on the basis of a mutual sense of negation is a new concept. The urgency of secrecy to keep an intimacy is evident in the next lines "Then there's a pair of us? / Don't tell they'll advertise- you know!" The reluctance to be a public

[35] Nancy Rubin Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution: the secret pen of Mercy Otis Warren and the founding of a nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008) xiv.
[36] Reynolds 339.
[37] Emily Dickinson, #288 c.1861, *Norton Anthology Literature by Women*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985) 846.

figure and to be forced to take part in social events as decorum demands is visible in the last stanza "How dreary – to be – Somebody/ How public – like a Frog - / To tell one's name – the livelong June - /To an admiring Bog! " The link of the frog and the bog put almost out of context into an identity issue of presenting oneself, makes the reader question matters as trivial as greeting someone as a sign of respect and good manners. Most critics agree that Dickinson responds "to repressions that surround her and threaten to control her, change her into something other than she is or might be."[38] There is definitely a sense of urgency in her poetry. Her themes are, however, universal and sensual; many would see them as expanding beyond the realms of antebellum literature.

Such writing as Dickinson's challenges us on two levels – on analyzing the technical form and its effect and on analyzing the subject matter. This can be done on the basis of literary forms and literary theories, and one way of analyzing literature is through the method of various types of reading. The most notable difference to approaching literature in general, can often be made on the basis of gender. So how does a woman read differently from a man? What does it mean to read as a woman?

Jonathan Culler states that "To read as a woman is to avoid reading as a man, to identify the specific defenses and distortions of male readings and provide correctives".[39] Though Culler fails to outline these defenses and distortions, he does provide some fundamental guidelines for such reading. Accordingly, to read as a woman requires that one approach a work from a feminist vantage point and, therefore, not regard the work from the perspective of patriarchy.

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[38] *Feminist Critics Read Emily Dickinson,* ed. Suzanne Juhasz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 17.

[39] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 54.

In order to grasp the difficulties involved in attempting to "read as a woman", it is worth considering the statement of the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir that "One is not born but rather becomes a woman … it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature."[40] This would assert the view that a woman is not determined biologically, but socially, and therefore her roles pre-determine her fate. This view can be seen extended in the works of Judith Fetterly. In her book, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (1978), she argues that because women were and are raised in a language system and literature that still presumes its authors and readers are male, they become psychologically "immasculated" – they learn to think and read and even write like men. The "resisting reader" of her book's title fights that transformation and detects the ways in which the text's constructions of its world reflect assumptions about gender itself, as well as reproduction, marriage, careers, and many other things in a culture which may be reconstructed according to the gender of their narrator.[41] Criticism founded on the postulate of continuity between women's experience of social and familial structures and their experience as readers "takes considerable interest in the situations and psychology of female characters, investigating attitudes to women or the "images of women" in the works of an author, a genre, or a period."[42]

Nevertheless, Reynolds warns against purely gendered analysis of Dickinson's poetry, as it has been undertaken by many critics. He states:

> Dickinson's poetry is most characteristic of her era's best women's writing in its extraordinary flexibility of tone, its refusal to rest comfortably in individual gender

[40] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1952) 301.
[41] "Women Writers and Gendered Reading: The "Resisting Reader" and the Hesitant Writer", 19 Aug. 2006 <http://faculty.goucher.edu/eng211/women_writers_and_gendered_readi.htm> >.
[42] Culler 46.

> roles, its magnificent assertion of creativity through the fabrication of dense imagery, its gaps and indirections, and its gender specific quest for a gender-free reality.[43]

It is, therefore, possible to see in Dickinson a rebel against the restrictions put on her by society, as well as a woman in the quest for a more universal spirit that is inherent to the world and life beyond death.

Various approaches to literature and its study produce a number of multi-layered interpretations. The most simple may be seen in the various developments of the genres and characters depicted within these genres. Other layers are formed when these characters are seen from a broader perspective as reflections of the social and political atmosphere of the era. Even more complex ones result from analyses incorporating awareness of the subject positions of various segments of the period's population, such as various forms of gender reading.

3.3 Men's Attitudes Towards Female Literature

Men's attitudes towards female literature differed considerably, depending on the female writer. Some, like the British writer Mary Wollstonecraft, were absolutely condemned; others, like Phillis Wheatley, were officially praised and even invited by George Washington to his house during his presidency. In the later period of 1820-1865 women writers were extremely diverse, and the attitudes of men varied. The general impression, however, was that female literature was inferior to that of the male, and women often wrote under pseudonyms when they wanted their work to be taken seriously. Nathaniel Hawthorne, for example, complained that:

> America is now wholly given over to a damned mob scribbling women, and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. [44]

[43] Reynolds 412.

The fact women writers were becoming more popular is a fact; nevertheless, their numbers and proportion had declined in comparison to men in the 1830-1860 period, and the literature produced at the time varied considerably in content. Hawthorne's discontent might reflect his need to support a family in an ever more competitive literary environment; on the other hand, it could also represent inflated self-confidence and a sense of male superiority in the area of literature. Nevertheless, Hawthorne did admire certain female writers. In his letter to his publisher, he talks with praise of Fanny Fern. He says:

> I have since been reading "Ruth Hall"; and I must say I enjoyed it a good deal. The woman writes as if the Devil was in her; and that is the only condition under which a woman ever writes anything worth reading. Generally women write like emasculated men, and are only distinguished from male authors by a greater feebleness and folly; but when they throw off the restraints of decency, and come before the public stark naked, as it were—then their books are sure to possess character and value. Can you tell me anything about this Fanny Fern? If you meet her, I wish you would let her know how much I admire her.[45]

It is thus visible that Hawthorne did admire strong personalities and was fascinated by the energy that had "possessed" Fanny Fern and allowed her to demonstrate her anger. It was the electric fluidity he appreciated, the unveiling and unleashing of hidden creativity and frustration at the world that oppressed women just as it oppressed Fanny Fern in her fictionalized character of Ruth Hall. However, prejudice is audible in the rhetoric. Firstly, Hawthorne refers to female writers as "emasculated men", establishing writing and literature as a purely male arena where the rules are those of based on a patriarchal way of thinking. Secondly, he considers their mode of writing tainted with female characteristics of

[44] Hawthorne's 1855 letter to his publisher William D. Ticknor, quoted in Fred L. Pattee, *The Feminine Fifties* (New York: Appleton-Century Co., 1940) 110.
[45] Quoted in Joyce W. Warren, *Fanny Fern An Independent Woman* (USA: University of Virginia, 1992) 121.

"feebleness and folly", referring to the sensual-domestic literature, which he loathed. By going against the traditional conventions which the society permits a woman, Hawthorne believes the she can unveil the darker and genuine side of the characters, which makes the work worth reading.

Nevertheless, despite the prejudice, Hawthorne was quite sensitive to women's oppression and drew his inspiration from it. He shared his sympathy by creating strong female characters in his fiction. His appreciation came through the depiction of their complexity because in creating his characters "Hawthorne consistently brought together opposing cultural forces."[46] He mingled various stereotypes of the literature to produce new characters, such as Hester Prynne, who embodied both the sacred and demonic and thereby challenged Puritan doctrine. Inspiration for Hester might have been drawn from Anne Hutchinson, but the adultery in the story, the produced gloom and exploited dark corners of the soul, almost turn Hester's depiction into a blasphemy. His other characters, too, show admiration for great figures such as Margaret Fuller, who is said to have served as his model for Zenobia in the *Blithedale Romance* and whose fate of drowning seems emblematic. Hawthorne's female characters are very strong women with an undeferential attitude; but, more importantly, they are portrayed as human beings, not simply as female stereotypes..

If Hawthorne's attitudes towards women were generally positive in his novels, Emerson's attitude towards women was ambiguous. He was surrounded by intellectual women of the Transcendentalist circle; his mother lived with him in the first marriage to take care of his first wife (who died of tuberculosis) and then for some time after he had married his second wife, Lydia Jackson, whom he renamed to Lidian. Thus, Emerson was always in the company of women. However, his attitude to his wife appears rather

[46] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 115.

patronizing in the way they addressed each other. It is strange he would call her Asia or Lidian, whereas she called him Mr. Emerson.[47] Nevertheless, Emerson was one of the men who signed the Declaration of Principles in 1850, and he made several statements supporting women's rights. He agreed upon having the same educational opportunities for both sexes when he wrote, "I think it is impossible to separate the interests and education of the sexes...every country, in its roll of honor, has as many women as men."[48] However, he insisted on the idea that a woman influences a man most through emotional proximity, that "she can never be very far from his ear, never not of his counsel, if she has really something to urge that is good in itself and agreeable to nature."[49] This phrasing might well lead one to suspect that Emerson was at least implicitly endorsing an interpretation which Margaret Fuller attacks in her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* when she states that the argument women influence men in the private sphere is inadequate.

However, some see his work very positively when they say:

> He called openly for women to receive their "one half of the world," their "full rights of all kinds, — to education, to employment, to equal laws of property, equal rights in marriage, in the exercise of the professions, and of suffrage." He argued that if women were denied suffrage, they should also not be taxed. And "if the woman demand votes, offices and political equality with men...it must not be refused...[their] aspiration of this century will be the code of the next."[50]

The fact he said these things is true but one must also see the evasions in these assertions. The statement: "If you do refuse them a vote, you will also refuse to tax them,--

[47] Robert D. Jr. Richardson, *Emerson: The Mind on Fire* (California: University of California Press, 1995) 192-193.
[48] Women's Rights, 30th April 2011 < http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/emerson/Womens-Rights.php>.
[49] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>
[50] Women's Rights, 30th April 2011 < http://www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/emerson/Womens-Rights.php>.

according to our Teutonic principle, No representation, no tax"[51] is rather an insertion of an ironic remark to elevate the tension of being forced to make a choice whether to allow the vote or not. While Emerson believed women had rights to equal laws because of their human nature, he insisted on the fact that the genders had differences and thus might best maintain different functions. Throughout his address on "Woman" (delivered to the Women's Rights Convention in 1855), he avoids any overt assertion of male superiority. However, he cites Plato to say "Women are the same as men in faculty, only less in degree."[52] Therefore, he uses the Greek philosopher to evade endorsement of complete identity of male and female capabilities. Similarly, he deconstructs the implicit hierarchy of spheres in the common saying that the man is the head of the family and the woman of the hearth by ambiguously reconstructing it into the more global "Man is the will, and Woman the sentiment."[53] Emerson also uses a quotation from a woman depicting her husband to show one aspect of a harmonious relationship.

"If he esteemed her at a higher rate than she in herself could have deserved, he was the author of that virtue he doted on, while she only reflected his own glories upon him. All that she was, was *him*, while he was hers, and all that she is now, at best, but his pale shade."[54]

The woman's place is, therefore, to serve as the man's reflection, her life is dedicated to him and she takes pleasure in his affection and in giving herself completely to him as they become one body and soul. Emerson also envisions a similar undertaking by the husband, so this is not a simple reiteration of the old Puritan doctrine of male superiority, although

[51] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.
[52] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.
[53] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.
[54] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.

one may suspect evasion in the absence of an explicit rejection of that doctrine. In addition, Emerson accounts for gender differences:

> The first thing men think of, when they love, is to exhibit their usefulness and advantages to the object of their affection. Women make light of these, asking only love. They wish it to be an exchange of nobleness.[55]

He depicts the different nature of the sexes in understanding and demonstrating love – the male desire to support, protect and be admired for his exhibition and the female desire of sentiment. In this way, Emerson avoids commitment to the idea of identical capacities, instead attributing equal validity to the widespread male preoccupation with external practicality (or productivity) and the female counterpart preoccupation with inward consolidation.(or harmonization).

In terms of the right to vote, these rights correspond to the principles of equality and pursuit of happiness. However, Emerson does not believe the political environment is a good place for women. One reason he gives why he sees no reason to oppose women's suffrage is because of the situation where certain men:

> give every innocent citizen his ticket as he comes in, informing him that this is the vote of his party; and how the innocent citizen, without further demur; goes and drops it in the ballot-box, I cannot but think he will agree that most women might vote as wisely.[56]

Thus, since political decisions are already dictated beforehand by the influential employers or politicians and men do not really prove that they are making any real changes apart from

[55] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.
[56] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.

following orders, Emerson sees women capable of at least the same thing—or perhaps, from the pragmatically optimistic perspective that Emerson valorized in his later writings, something better. Here, again, we find ambivalent, evasive engagement with, but conflicted endorsement of, women' rights.

In fact, Emerson is quite reluctant to see women in politics, but his rhetoric on the issue ultimately endorses self-determination by the women themselves. He claims he does "not think it yet appears that women wish this equal share in public affairs. But it is they and not we that are to determine it."[57] Therefore, though Emerson does not see women willing to accept the change stepping into politics might bring, he believes in the right of the individual, in this case the woman, to make her choice. The conclusion, however, appears optimistic, and Emerson sees mutual comprehension in the spirit. He says:

> The new movement is only a tide shared by the spirits of man and woman; and you may proceed in the faith that whatever the woman's heart is prompted to desire, the man's mind is simultaneously prompted to accomplish.[58]

The man and the woman are two entities that complement each other and are intimately connected; because one is automatically dependent on the other (though not, in this case, hierarchically), the change affects them both. Emerson's attitude to women in his 1855 Women's Rights Convention address on "Woman" may be seen as an answer to the women's rights activists who were aiming to get suffrage in his era. However, it may also be seen as a male response to the writing of the strong-minded Margaret Fuller, since many issues she addresses and many arguments she attacks in her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* are either repeated or answered using the same structure of discourse.

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[57] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.
[58] Ralph Waldo Emerson "Woman" 30th April 2011 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/woman.html>.

4. Margaret Fuller

4.1 Fuller – the Outstanding Woman

Margaret Fuller is one of the first women to have been included in the canon of American literature and is certainly one of the most prominent and tough-minded personalities of her era. Her first memory was connected to the death of her young baby sister. She described it as "My first experience of life was one of death."[1]This perhaps led to a very strong self-awareness and fuller appreciation of life, which she would perceive not as two opposites but forces that mingled to create a whole. Provided, as she was by her father, with a good and strict education that was not available to most women in her time, it may be said she was raised as if she were a man. In fact, it was because of her strong intellect, attributed to a "man's mind," that she was considered exceptional. This was a notion she attacked in her writing, but also something with which she battled personally. She said "I am 'too fiery'…yet I wish to be seen as I am, and would lose all rather than soften away anything." [..] "My character is, after all, still more feminine than masculine."[2] She strongly believed that a woman had a right to express herself despite all conventions of female behavior, and above all, she wanted people to perceive her as a woman with her own character. This can be seen in her conversations with friends:

"I love best to be a woman," she told Willam Henry Channing, "but womanhood at present is too straitly bound to give me scope. At hours I live truly as a woman, at others I stifle…. Desperate as a gamester I feel at moments, yet I cling to the faith that God cannot lose His great throw of Man. Men disappoint me so. I weary in this playground of boys!... I wish I were a man and then there would be *one*."[3]

[1] Margaret Bell, *Margaret Fuller* (New York : Paper Books, 1930) 23.
[2] Joseph Jay Deiss, *The Roman Years of Margaret Fuller* (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1969) 16.
[3] Deiss 16-17.

She was proud of her gender, but also aware she was trapped between the two spheres posited by society. The demand for the "ladylike" behavior and restrictions laid on women by laws and social codes caused her to feel strained. Yet, she felt men could not compete with her either and she felt disappointed that they usurped certain fields of activity to themselves despite the fact that they unable to prove superior. Rather, she felt that their field of influence was "a playground of boys". The feeling of being out of place is evident when she confides to her diary "Tis an evil lot to have a man's ambition and a woman's heart."[4]

Indeed, Fuller was ambitious; her admirers were numerous, and she managed to achieve a lot within her short life even though she was considered plain by some. Deiss, in Fuller's autobiography, asks an interesting question:

Why, then, did her fellows consider that she lacked beauty, when she attracted-repelled them more strongly than any other woman of their time? All-Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, William Henry Channing, James Freeman Clarke, Henry David Thoreau, George Ripley, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, James Russell Lowell, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Theodore Parker, Edward Everett, William Cullen Bryant, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Horace Greeley, Julia Ward Howe, Elizabeth Peabody-all these and many lesser persons felt the tingling shock of her electricity.[5]

Her outstanding personality is definitely the key to such a question. Indeed, Fuller was widely respected not only in America but also in Europe, where she traveled widely and took part in revolutions, particularly in Italy. For example, Mickiewicz, whom she met in France, said that she was "the only woman to whom it has been given to touch what is

[4] Joseph Jay Deiss, *The Roman Years of Margaret Fuller* , (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1969) 17.
[5] Deiss 14-15.

decisive in the present world and to have a presentiment of the world of the future."[6] Fuller also became emblematic for figures such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, who used her as a model for some of his novels, in particular the character of Zenobia in the *Blithedale Romance*. The "masculine" woman of his novel is strong, independent, creates fear in men as well as awe. Her fate of drowning is perhaps a punishment for her unfeminine character – a contradiction to the character of Priscilla. Yet, both women in the story possess a repelling and attractive force, and, through the character of Coverdale, Hawthorne is able to project his confusion and emotions in relation to them both. Greeley called her "the most remarkable woman that America has yet known, the loftiest, bravest soul that has yet irradiated the form of American womanhood."[7] He admired her work greatly and when she started working for him "she became the first full time book reviewer in journalism"[8] who "by 1846, was the publication's first female editor."[9] She discussed the subject of women with Greeley, who published her most famous work, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*. Greeley argued that

if women are to be equal, always treat them as such; do not exact a deference from men; do not set them on pedestals and expect men to worship and deify them. If woman is man's equal in the office, let her be his equal in the drawing-room." Margaret expected this gallant attitude; equality of intellect and of opportunity need not do away with chivalry, she argued.[10]

Thus female emancipation and a gentleman's behavior did not contradict each other. In fact, Fuller expected gallantry as part of good manners that were to prevail in society. She did not

[6] Deiss 43.
[7] Bell 161.
[8] Philip Callow, *From Noon to Starry Night: A Life of Walt Whitman* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1992) 110.
[9] Susan Cheever, *American Bloomsbury: Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau; Their Lives, Their Loves, Their Work* (Detroit: Thorndike Press, 2006) 175.
[10] Bell 160.

understand "gallant" behavior as part of the nexus of restrictions imposed on a woman by society.

Fuller challenged male supremacy on all grounds and because of her intellectual capacities, strong and famous personalities found it hard to come to terms with her character. Her character was not submissive and she could outshine others. As Deiss writes in Fuller's biography:

Of them all, it was Emerson who most loved and most hated her, guardedly admitting his "strange, cold-warm, attractive-repelling conversations with Margaret." Often she had taunted him with phrases like, "You are intellect, I am life!" Or, implying a perilously close relationship, she wrote, "Your prudence, my wise friend, allows too little room for the mysterious whisperings of life." In revenge he said she was like the "crackling of thorns under a pot" – yet "her talk was a comedy, she made me laugh more than I like." He confessed, ruefully, "I found she lived at a rate so much faster than mine, and violent compared with mine." Then his great ego took umbrage at another ego: She had, he said, "a rather mountainous ME"[11]

Fuller reflected Emerson's fears, for as a woman she matched him in his grandeur and ego. She was outspoken, witty, and possessed a drive and energy in her love for life that Emerson found himself lacking. To Emerson she became "dear compatriot, sister and friend"[12] in the correspondence they exchanged during her period in Europe. When she turned to him for advice whether to return to the USA given the dangers she was liable to face in Italy, Emerson eloquently advised her to stay. "The truth was that he felt Ossoli had 'taken her away' from him, and he rather dreaded her return, as later inadvertently he was to reveal in a

[11] Deiss 15.
[12] Deiss 140.

letter to Carlyle."[13] It was Emerson who, after Fuller's drowning during a shipwreck near Fire Island, New York, decided to write her biography.

Fuller was influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft and shared a similar fate, in that both had had a passionate affair in their life and an illegitimate child (it has not been determined whether Fuller actually married Ossoli after her son was born). However, before her trip to Europe, she had been well established as a writer with a reputation as formidable as Wollstonecraft's. Although Fuller did not associate herself with any group apart from the Transcendentalist circle, she started the "Conversations" at Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's house in 1839. "Fuller served as the 'nucleus of conversation' and hoped to answer the 'great questions' facing women: 'What were we born to do? How shall we do it? which so few ever propose to themselves 'till their best years are gone by'"[14] It was perhaps these early discussions of women's issues that might have influenced Emerson (and others like him) to feel more sympathetic toward the women's cause and to sign the Declaration of Principles in 1850. Even though she never called herself a feminist, her work *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* is considered one of the first American feminist writings.

However, she "was attacked by some working-class feminists as an intellectual distanced from the realities of the average woman's experience."[15] Fuller was an intellectual and had been born into a well-established family lacking the experience of a woman in the mill or the factory. In fact, as the historian Reynolds says:

The pioneering suffrage newspaper *The Una* ran a working-class serial novella, "Stray Leaves from a Seamstress's Journal," which said of Fuller: " [A] veil is between her and the

[13] Deiss 303.
[14] Megan Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005) 387.
[15]David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1999) 378.

rude, practical, every-day working world. She may erite, and teach, and call herself a laborer, but this brings her only into distant relationship with us." “Could Fuller look into seamstresses’ comfortless homes and see them toiling fourteen to sixteen hours a day," the author continued, “she could then realize how difficult, how almost impossible is self-development, when there is only the means of keeping body and soul together.”[16]

Working-class women saw Fuller as living a different reality from theirs, since what they needed was their most basic rights and the physical work that was often their only means of survival from a desperate wage. As a well-established author, Fuller was able to sustain herself for a different wage than the common women. In her writing, working-class women saw their conditions as marginalized in the heat of a more intellectual debate of classics, which they had neither time nor opportunity to read in the same manner as she did. Their work was their only means of survival, which at the same time exhausted them, and self-development seemed an ideal rather than a plausible reality.

Nevertheless, Fuller’s reputation, capacities, and potential value as a leader of the movement for women's rights were evident. Paula Wright confessed in a speech delivered at a woman’s rights convention “To her, I, at least, had hoped to confide the leadership of this movement. It can never be known if she would have accepted it; the desire had been expressed to her by letter.” [17] Thus, Fuller’s genius is left to be discovered in the work she left behind, the work that shaped her era and still conveys a message to the contemporary reader, particularly on the subject of women’s rights.

4.2 The Great Lawsuit and Woman in the Nineteenth Century

[16] Reynolds 351.
[17] Paulina Wright Davis at first national woman’s right convention in Worcester, Mass., 1850. HWS, I, 217 quoted in Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 350-351.

In "The Great Lawsuit: Man versus Men, Woman versus Women", which was criticized when it appeared in the *Dial* (1843) and modified and re-written to *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1844), Fuller depicts the lives of and gives various points of view on the position of women in her era. The first work is presented as a legal case and the rhetoric and language, which is used and seen frequently as one dedicated to the male world, permit Fuller graciously to advocate the rights of women as capable of representing themselves in the male world. In addition, the use of the legal language of a lawsuit allows Fuller to pass unrecognized as a female author since it was the policy employed by the *Dial* that its authors stayed anonymous. The content of the work comprises various aspects – the political, religious and social world, where the position of women was not equal to that of men. By presenting various sides of the argument, Fuller renders the work thought-provoking as she begins by making the reader an impartial judge and transforms him/her through the process of reading, offering new revolutionary perspectives on the male and female aspect.

Fuller begins by presenting the first piece as a lawsuit describing the state of man in history in pleading in various cases of law, which is subject to constant change. This creates the idea of constant energetic movement but also instability. The article depicts various instances of abuse that were instigated by men. In addition, Fuller further involves the religious perspective of the law, which together with references to various historic events and Greek myths, open room for the discussion of various forms of revolutionary change. Yet, she claims "still it is not in vain, that the verbal statement has been made, 'All men are born free and equal.'" There it stands, a golden certainty, wherewith to encourage the good, to shame the bad."[18] Although humanity is subject to constant change and abuse exists in the world, certain aspects nevertheless remain unquestioned. Chief among these is the belief in

[18] Margaret Fuller, "The Great Lawsuit," *Norton Anthology of American Literature Volume* 1, ed. Ronald Gottesman, et al. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979) 1390.

the founding concept of America, which is the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence that no American shall ever violate, the belief that "All men are born free and equal." Using these concepts, and transforming and applying the natural law to the American codex and political culture, Fuller is able to present her case of women as those having a right that must not be violated. She mentions the brutalities of the French revolution, which gave women their rights, as well as the restrictions on women by the Mosaic Law in order to distinguish these situations from the American political culture. She builds her case by appealing to the American values of equality and democracy. On the basis of this sentiment, she presents her case of women, marginally appealing to the awakening of feeling for the situation of the Afro-Americans and Native Americans, when she says:

But I need not speak of what has been done towards the red man, the black man. These deeds are the scoff of the world; and they have been accompanied by such pious words, that the gentlest would not dare to intercede with, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."[19]

By saying she would not speak of atrocities but mention them, there may be ground to argue that she consciously emphasizes the problem without going into the details. As the critic Reynolds argues “Fuller’s style reinforces her message: she views woman as “a harmonizer of vehement elements,” and so she avoids violence and quirkiness in her own prose.”[20] Such an approach is necessary if we consider the desire to establish an impartial stance objective in its outward form but subjective in its argument and emotionally sympathetic towards women, a position, which Fuller aims to create.

[19] Fuller GL 1389.
[20] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 351.

Furthermore, Fuller uses the subject of the minorities to provide links to the position of women. Firstly, this is done in the realms of a political sphere. Fuller likens the position of women to that of slaves as they are not allowed to represent themselves. She then presents the hypocrisy of the male point of view that women need not represent themselves for men can do that for them. She feels that the arguments that men are influenced by women and thus know what they need and that women are the 'weaker sex' do not correspond to reality as :

Those who think the physical circumstances of Woman would make a part in the affairs of national government unsuitable, are by no means those who think it is impossible for negresses to endure field-work, even during pregnancy, or for sempresses to go through their killing labors.[21]

Secondly, her argument turns to the social sphere and the absurdity of the claim that the woman belongs solely to the household, since not only are women present at the polls, but they are also not kept from "drudgery" in the realms of the inner circle as, for example, the mentioned sempresses, Native American or Afro-American women. In addition, Fuller argues that women, like all human beings, need to expand outside the household and that they are already given possibilities to prove their organizational capabilities needed in the political sphere, for example, at ladies-fairs. She also attacks the idea that men can fairly represent women because the fact that men believe a woman is designed for man does not permit them to act beyond this belief. Furthermore, she believes a true representation of a woman by man also varies according to how sensitive a man is to the woman's needs. She sees some men are capable of this and some are not; some are capable of overcoming social prejudice and some are not. In fact, she sees this could be likened to the position of those in

[21] Margaret Fuller, "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," *Norton Anthology Literature by Women*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985) 296.

favor and those against abolitionism. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, Fuller talks about newspapers and the columns as a source on the subjects of unequal rights of women and men. When she mentions these in "The Great Lawsuit", she links the topic to that of abolitionism and provides an explanation of the connection:

It is not surprising that it should be the Anti-Slavery party that pleads for woman, when we consider merely that she does not hold property on equal terms with men; so that, if a husband dies without a will, the wife, instead of stepping at once into his place as head of the family, inherits only a part of his fortune, as if she were a child, or ward only, not an equal partner. [22]

Fuller proceeds to mention topics of ill-treatment but does not elaborate on the details; her work is void of emotional treatment of the subject, and there is no parody or lightening. Just as her choice of the style of a lawsuit suggests, the instances of abuse that Fuller mentions - the ill-treatment of slaves, the social roots of prostitution, the suffering of drunkards' wives, the lack of laws that would protect women – all these are mentioned as a list, mentioned in passing and remain as a case that needs solutions, as a case on paper, void of feeling and left upon the decision of the judge and the court. These courts, nevertheless, are places ruled by men, whose laws are set by men and therefore are more likely to act on the man's behalf. Although Fuller keeps her part of impartiality and excuses the judges' decisions in extreme cases saying "there is private action in the woman's favor,"[23] she emphasizes the need for reforms for a woman's position. This should be done for a woman precisely because as "the weaker party, she ought to have legal protection, which would make such oppression impossible."[24] In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, this subject is elaborated:

[22] Fuller GL 1392.
[23] Fuller GL 1393.
[24] Fuller GL 1393.

I do believe that this mode of kidnapping -- and it is frequent enough in all classes of society -- will be by the next age viewed as it is by Heaven now, and that the man who avails himself of the shelter of men's laws to steal from a mother her own children, or arrogate any superior right in them, save that of superior virtue, will bear the stigma he deserves, in common with him who steals grown men from their mother-land, their hopes, and their homes.[25]

It is in particular the maternal role, which was a typical emblem for a woman's position in a patriarchal society, which Fuller dwells upon as an appeal to men and an argument against slavery. In likening women's position to that of African-Americans and connecting these, Fuller implicitly suggests that they might well share the same fate either of success or of doom and marks a strong connection of interest in both groups.

Another way in which Fuller aims to appeal for women is on religious grounds. Fuller presents her case of women with an allusion to the Bible where man and woman become one body and soul in their union and she thus says it is necessary

that she, the other half of the same thought, the other chamber of the heart of life, needs now take her turn in the full pulsation, and that improvement in the daughters will best aid in the reformation of the sons of this age.[26]

The practical necessity of education as a benefit to male society, the appeal on the basis of sentiment, and reference to religious beliefs become central arguments in Fuller's work. That is, of course, until later arguments develop to go beyond these limited views and expand upon the notion of the soul. Fuller makes attempts to establish a new political culture on the basis of national sentiment and belief that America distinctly differs from Europe and

[25] Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[26] Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

that the foundations of equality are untouchable principles, which must, nevertheless, be put into practice. Fuller appeals to the American principle of freedom and once again makes a connection between the women's rights movements and Abolitionism and accounts her reasons thus:

Of all its banners, none has been more steadily up-held, and under none have more valor and willingness for real sacrifices been shown, than that of the champions of the enslaved African. And this band it is, which, partly from a natural following out of principles, partly because many women have been prominent in that cause, makes, just now, the warmest appeal in behalf of Woman.[27]

Fuller sees the necessity for America to admit the truth and acknowledge the wrongs done to the minorities; she especially mentions the African-Americans and women, between which she draws a parallel. She demands America to comply with its foundational premise of equality and the demands of a new system based on that premise. She appeals to the moral principles of the "Pilgrims," "Puritans," "Heralds of Holiness" (nevertheless, the reference to the newspapers of the day is quite ironic since these were extremely conservative in their views). The use of the rhetorical techniques of the three emphasizes the urgency of the demand to change stereotypes, since it was precisely the pilgrims that set off to America to change the world for the prospect of a better future. She says change is needed, though its advocates may be "coldly regarded as the Jacobins of their day." [28]

Fuller's concern for the position of women is seen in her vehement insistence on the need for a change in the mode of thinking. Many instances are given, arguing both from the view of tradition and religion. Perhaps the only ridiculous moment in the text comes with a conversation between those that claim they do not want to disturb the norms and traditions as these would lead to social and relationship chaos. The technique of a dialogue makes the

[27] Fuller GL 1391.
[28] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

tone of the text appear neutral. However, ridicule is found in the conversation itself. After inquiring whether a woman is permitted to have her rights, the writer is told that this idea does not appeal to the man since it would disturb the natural order. When the author then asks whether the man's wife had been asked for an opinion, the answer is negative on the pretext that she would not contradict the man. When the man is pressed on the matter he inquires:

> "Am I not the head of the house?"
>
> "You are not the head of your wife. God has given a mind of her own."
>
> "I am the head and she the heart."

"God grant you play true to one another, then! I suppose I am to be grateful that you did not say she was only the hand."[29]

The use of everyday idioms--phrases and play with words, puns and double meanings (like that of "the hand" as a connection to the helping hand, for example)—call attention to more serious matters that show how little space had actually been given to women to express themselves unless they had men's permission to think. Fuller depicts the situation of her time as such:

> Many women are considering within themselves what they need that they have not, and what they can have if they find they need it. Many men are considering whether women are capable of being and having more than they are and have, *and* whether, if so, it will be best to consent to improvement in their condition.[30]

This change of thinking is a conclusion to the conversation and illustrates the unwillingness on part of men to disturb a seeming familial and social harmony.

[29] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[30] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

Fuller uses various oratorical techniques to capture the audience, and one may be seen as an attempt to preach and appeal to her audience on the basis of religion. She cunningly provokes her reader to reaction. For example, in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* Fuller inverts the phrases commonly attributed to women such as Shakespeare's "Frailty thy name is woman." She then applies the analysis to man in his quest for universal truth. Fuller does not doubt that such a truth will be found, a truth implying that all humans are equal and should be treated equally, for she sees that even the Bible promises that those who seek will find what they are seeking. [31] She states the various approaches and methods man uses to evaluate life – scientific and intellectual, pure experience and the experience of the soul, and given the situation of her time, she denies the possibility of harmony unless change occurs. Evaluating quite skeptically the scientific approach, her attitude may be likened to Wordsworth's in his poem "The Tables Turned" with its plea to "Come forth into the light of things,/Let Nature be your teacher.[..] Enough of Science and of Art;/Close up those barren leaves; /Come forth, and bring with you a heart/That watches and receives."[32] Yet, Fuller's desire for change is that in the natural spiritual awakening of the soul, which requires change in attitude to benefit the human race. She says "We cannot expect to see any one sample of completed being, when the mass of men still lie engaged in the sod, or use the freedom of their limbs only with wolfish energy."[33] Change is, therefore, particularly required in the mentality of the people and here Fuller puts forward her Transcendentalist ideas and quotes St. Martin as an advocate of pure divinity, where the soul must hold to the truth and God. By appealing to ideals and perfection, Fuller is able to argue against the imperfections of the real world. For example, she is able to point to the discrepancies of Goethe's greatly admired work and his absolutely different attitude and coldness to his

[31] Matthew 7:7-8.
32 William Wordsworth, "Tables Turned" poem 20 Feb. 2010 <http://wonderingminstrels.blogspot.com/2000/04/tables-turned-william-wordsworth.html>.
33 Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

family in real life. [34] This may be argued in relation to Fuller as well--in particular, in the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne, especially in the *Blithedale Romance*, where the "links between Zenobia and Fuller are obvious enough: both began as outspoken defenders of women's rights and both (in Hawthorne's view) comprised their feminist principles when they fell desperately in love with unlikely men."[35]

In fact, by challenging discrepancies between reality and ideals, Fuller attempts to create a truthful picture of the situation and the desire for an improved situation. She deconstructs the notions of institutions by presenting contradictory arguments when she says:

> Fourier, whose nature was, above all, constructive, looked to them too exclusively. Better institutions, he thought, will make better men. Goethe expressed, in every way, the other side. If one man could present better forms, the rest could not use them till ripe for them. […] Both are educating the age to a clearer consciousness of what Man needs, what Man can be; and better life must ensue.[36]

By giving both pictures, each of which appears whole, and then demonstrating the fallaciousness and value of both, Fuller shows a desire for progress. It is consciousness that can be seen as a flow of movement behind any real change requiring work on both sides – men and women. In fact, by revealing fallacies on both sides, Fuller is able to provoke in the mind of the reader a quest for a potential harmony. Such an approach is done first by presenting to men a mode of reviewing their manner of thought, secondly by appealing to women's thought, and thirdly by appealing upon the grounds of the soul.

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34 Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
35 Reynolds 379.
36 Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

Thus Fuller takes a practical stance, summoning men to stop fearing the excesses on the women's part if they are granted political and legal equality. She focuses on the debate about enlarging women's rights to property and sees it as a process, which will be gradual and needs inspire no fear on the male side, since men's own convictions sometimes startle them. Nevertheless, she does argue for a need of varied possibilities of employment as she states "women need, especially at this juncture, a much greater range of occupation than they have, to rouse their latent powers."[37] Fuller uses the methods of a scientific approach when presenting the idea that women should be given the same chances of vocation as men and supports her arguments by quoting statistics. She mentions the findings of the French social theorist François Fourier that "one third of women as likely to have a taste for masculine pursuits, one third of men for feminine"[38] This fact given, she proceeds to creating a pantheon of women's history and cites historical examples where women successfully fitted various "male" occupations, like sea-captains or military leaders (such as Emily Plater, who successfully commanded a company in the Polish army fighting against Russia in 1831). Her examples of strong women in history are not limited to occupations; in fact, throughout her work names of important women fill the pages. She says:

The names of nations are feminine. Religion, Virtue, and Victory are feminine. To those who have a superstition as to outward signs it is not without significance that the name of the Queen of our mother-land should at this crisis be Victoria. Victoria the First. Perhaps to us it may be given to disclose the era there outwardly presaged. [39]

[37] Fuller NWC 307.
[38] Fuller NWC 308.
[39] Fuller GL 1417.

Fuller's appeal to the importance of women for and in America is not only symbolic: like the belief in equality, it demands application in practice to create something new through progress and reform. As she mentions in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century:*

I wish Woman to live, *first* for God's sake. Then she will not make an imperfect man her god, and thus sink to idolatry. Then she will not take what is not fit for her from a sense of weakness and poverty. Then, if she finds what she needs in Man embodied, she will know how to love, and be worthy of being loved. [40]

Fuller thus believes in the imperfection of man and the need for development of the individual, and looks to God as a source of inspiration and on man (like herself) as imperfect. Thus, she indirectly accuses men of putting themselves into the position of little gods of their own world to dominate, but without having the appropriate direct authority. In this way, Fuller attacks the classical notions and restrictions given by institutions and the church. In addition, drawing upon the different and new cultural heritage of America, Fuller comments on the fact that American women have several cultural and religious advantages and freedoms which are not found elsewhere:

But they have time to think, and no traditions chain them, and few conventionalities, compared with what must be met in other nations. There is no reason why they should not discover that the secrets of nature are open, the revelations of the spirit waiting, for whoever will seek them. When the mind is once awakened to this consciousness, it will not be restrained by the habits of the past, but fly to seek the deeds of a heavenly future.[41]

[40] Fuller NWC 308.
[41] Margaret Fuller, "Woman in the Nineteenth Century," *The Writings of Margaret Fuller,* ed. Mason Wade (New York: Viking, 1941) 172.

Fuller believes in the necessity of reform that must come from women. She believes in the future of women and the need to awaken them from their passivity. In her prophetic language, similar to the image invoked when mentioning the oracles at Delphos, she acts as a seer and appeals as an optimist saying "The world at large is readier to let Woman learn and manifest the capacities of her nature than it ever was before, and here is a less encumbered field and freer air than anywhere else."[42] Once again, the emphasis on the possibility of reform that may have national overtones, aims to highlight the possibilities and differences in America in terms of freedom. She agrees on this point with another close observer of America, Tocqueville, who ascribed the womanly strength of American women in comparison to their European counterparts to economic fortunes and expansion of the frontier[43] and explained the different attitudes as due to the fact that "In the United States, Protestant teaching is combined with a very free constitution and a very democratic society, and in no other country is a girl left so soon or so completely to look after herself."[44] Furthermore, the liberal approach to many subjects in the United States may be seen in the development of various movements and particularly in the religious sphere, whose innovations subsequently became acceptable for the broader society--for example, the order of Quakers, where women were allowed to give testimonies; the mentioning of ardent fighters for women's rights such as the Grimke sisters; or accounts given by Fuller of the British writer Mrs. Jameson.

Fuller continues to argue in the realms of religion, and to support her views, she presents the famous figure of the then deceased Dr. William Ellery Channing, a foremost Unitarian preacher and theologian of the 19th century whom Fuller describes as a person

[42] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[43] Reynolds 341.
[44] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* translated by George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer and Max Lerner (New York: Harper and Row Publishers Inc., 1966) 565.

who understood women and their "indignation at the base injustice, in many respects, and in many regions, done to the sex"[45] especially since women who had the courage to speak up were rejected and assaulted. Fuller chooses Channing as an authority, not only to attract sympathy, but also to point out the religious aspect of the treatment of women. She says ""His own treatment of them was absolutely and thoroughly religious. He regarded them as souls, each of which had a destiny of its own, incalculable to other minds, and whose leading it must follow, guided by the light of a private conscience." On the basis of the soul, Fuller is once again able to ascertain the independence of women on men on religious grounds. On the basis of a shift to a religious rhetoric, Fuller achieves the effect of pursuit of individual freedom. Her use of the language calls "For Woman, if, by a sympathy as to outward condition, she is led to aid the enfranchisement of the slave, must be no less so, by inward tendency." In this way, Fuller bids women to seek their own development in the realms they can attain, even if these be not given as formal rights. In this way, as well, Fuller goes farther in her argument than when previously taking the religious concept of man's superiority since man was created before woman. In fact she takes the latter concept and puts the elements of man and woman that were to be in harmony, and shows how they had turned into disharmony since the man had neglected the woman's development "he did not clearly see that Woman was half himself; that her interests were identical with his; and that by the law of common being, he could never reach his true proportions while she remained in any wise shorn of hers."[46] This inequality may account for later discoveries in the text, where we have the shocking discovery of a father's fear that a daughter's education might prevent her from marrying, or be one of the reasons why the unequal position of women, makes certain women kill their female babies. Thus if at first, Fuller argued that without a mutual growth of the sexes development was not possible, she extends the view that each

[45] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[46] Fuller NWC 305.

person must work on the individual development of oneself. Thus, she shifts the discourse of her time concerning the benefits of a woman's education and argues that women should be educated and develop not so "that Woman may be a more valuable companion to Man, but because the Power who gave a power, by its mere existence signifies that it must be brought out toward perfection."[47] By imposing these ideas, she breaks the traditional perception of a woman as a property or commodity in a human body and summons women to search for themselves and examine their true selves.

Furthermore, Fuller shifts and presents arguments that if women possess a soul, all souls are solely accountable to God and neither good nor bad intentions of any types of restrictions should be permitted. In addition, Fuller offers examples of fallacies in man and their limited scope of understanding for women even amongst those who seemed to have portrayed women sympathetically--such as Jean Paul Richter, whose "foremost thought about his wife was that she could "cook something good"[48] Fuller presents a whole pantheon of women in history and talks about their reception as well as their depiction by men in the realms of art, literature and religion. She even reminds Americans about the importance of women:

We may accept as an omen for ourselves that it was Isabella who furnished Columbus with the means of coming hither. This land must pay back its debt to Woman, without whose aid it would not have been brought into alliance with the civilized world.[49]

The above quote proves women are important to society on various levels – political, social, as inspirations to men, but also for their individual qualities. Fuller continues to give examples of female fidelity and love as well as remarkable qualities of character in examples

[47] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[48] Fuller GL 1398.
[49] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

of women such as Panthea. By calling upon the various histories, she forces the reader to think about the past and start analyzing it, leaving space for analysis of and comparison with her own era without imposing too much criticism at once. In addition, the reader is drawn to examine the cultural imperatives and re-evaluate *a priori* assumptions, such as that a woman should not be in the realm of politics. Therefore, using historical empiricism and legal language, Fuller is able fully to consider women's role in history. (This is quite interesting given her earlier view and criticism of the use of historic and scientific approaches.).

Also, Fuller continues to examine the relationship of man and woman in the context of literature and illuminates the prejudice of male superiority in their presumptously speaking of a bright woman as a woman who deserved to be born a man. "Another used as highest praise, in speaking of a character in literature, the words 'a manly woman.' It is well known that of every strong woman they say she has a masculine mind."[50] She explains this presumption as a result of the male need to dominate and of male vulnerability in the face of a strong woman, for she says "Only a Brutus would rejoice in a Portia. Only Theseus could conquer before he wed the Amazonian Queen."[51] The balance of strong characters is an important part of the male-female relationship, and Fuller clearly warns men against seeking pleasure in outward beauty on the basis of a Greek legend where "Hercules wished rather to rest from his labors with Dejanira, and received the poisoned robe, as a fit guerdon. The tale should be interpreted to all those who seek repose with the weak."[52] Thus, Fuller clearly illustrates dangers of the lack of balance in character and harmony in relationships, which can become lethal. She continues to criticize men in that they, in their narrow vision of the world and desire to dominate, not only prevent women from maturing (since boy-like men desire girl-like women or surrogate mothers to take care of them), but also prevent their own

[50] Fuller GL 1397.
[51] Fuller GL 1397.
[52] Fuller GL 1397.

improvement (for in reality they too are imperfect). Since both sexes perceive gender inequality as natural, that assumption prevents development and thus harms them both.

She feels women should not be barred from following their maternal desires, since certain natural instincts will not permit them to abandon their maternal role; but permission to develop will turn them into happier human beings, which can be useful to the society and to the family. She states "I have urged on Woman independence of Man, not that I do not think the sexes mutually needed by one another, but because in Woman this fact has led to an excessive devotion, which has cooled love, degraded marriage, and prevented either sex from being what it should be to itself or the other."[53] Fuller further explains that by making the man their only world women forget God, because they fall into a trap, and that it is necessary to have a balanced relationship so that the best of the qualities of the couple may be brought to life. She also suggests the potential harm done to women by imposition of marriage and by the limitations of male rules, when she quotes a thinker saying "No married woman can represent the female world, for she belongs to her husband. The idea of Woman must be represented by a virgin."[54] She believes women should not be forbidden from giving expression to their thoughts, for only a woman who can have a virgin mind, which Fuller celebrates, can succeed in Virginia (Fuller makes a double reference to the female virgin mind and to America), where she sees the woman's future lying.

Fuller forces women to examine their own thoughts and bids women look to themselves and search their own beliefs and thoughts within themselves instead of being influenced and accepting dictated ideas from the outside world. She says women "must leave off asking them [men] and being influenced by them, but retire within themselves, and explore the

[53] Fuller NWC 308.
[54] Fuller NWC 309.

ground-work of life till they find their peculiar secret." [55] Fuller appeals to men's conscience, but at the same time summons women to take steps, when she says:

> We only ask men to remove arbitrary barriers. Some would like to do more. But I believe it needs that Woman show herself in her native dignity, to teach them how to aid her; their minds are so encumbered by tradition.[56]

Again, the imperfection of men here is stated, for they are in their world of tradition, and Fuller sees it as needful for women to change that situation by being active. Fuller appeals to women themselves to stop being passive and to look within themselves and their relationship to God for an answer. She says "Yet, then and only then will mankind be ripe for this, when inward and outward freedom of Woman as much as for Man shall be acknowledged as a *right*, not yielded as a concession."[57] Fuller believes that a person is bound and accountable only to God, and if men and women are to be equal and both are believed to have a soul, they must be allowed to expand and elaborate the talents they were given for the general benefit rather than have these suppressed. Fuller goes on to give an example of Miranda (a reflection of herself), saying she was lucky in that her father considered her sex equal to men and did not allow her to be idle in using the gifts God gave her, but forced her to work upon them, which in turn gained her the respect of men who otherwise seem uncompromising toward allowing women to be as she is. She says:

Religion was early awakened in my soul – a sense that what the soul is capable to ask it must attain, and that, though I might be aided and instructed by others, I must depend on myself as the only constant friend. This self-dependence, which was honored in me, is

[55] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[56] Fuller NWC 306.
[57] Fuller NWC 298.

deprecated as a fault in most women. They are taught to learn their rule from without, not to unfold it from within."[58]

She thus summons women to use their talent in accord with the scriptures, for she considers passivity idle in the way she had been taught by her father. Fuller believes in the concept of "self-reliance" as important for the woman, since a woman needs to "naturally develop self-respect, and learn self-help".[59] She criticizes men who see themselves as better and consider these self-reliant women as above average, criticizing terms such as "a manly woman".

In this way, Fuller criticizes this approach and condition when she attacks the common practice for she says women are not given real opportunities. She states:

If we study natural history, our observations may be made useful, by some male naturalist; if we draw well, we may make our services acceptable to the artists. But our names must not be known; and, to bring these labors to any result, we must take some man for our head, and be his hands. [60]

She fully acknowledges the situation, in some ways; she even refers to limited possibilities of expression in the realms of literature, for many female writers of her era used pseudonyms in order for their work to be considered more seriously by the critics. Nevertheless, rather than keeping the style of a jeremiad, Fuller is able to refer to positive visions of the future. She says:

Even without equal freedom with the other sex, they have already shown themselves so; and should these faculties have free play, I believe they will open new, deeper and purer sources of joyous inspiration than have as yet refreshed the earth.[61]

[58] Fuller NWC 299.
[59] Fuller NWC 299.
[60] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[61] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

To demonstrate society's injuries to women Fuller attacks men's and women's hypocrisy by attacking the traditional notions of *marriage de convenance*. She goes even further and attacks the negative perception of "old maids' and the culturally imbedded perception of marriage as something desirable, reminding us of Jane Austen's ironic opening line of *Pride and Prejudice* "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife."[62] Fuller argues that notions are developed on the basis of cultural acceptance, and celibacy should be undertaken as willingly as marriage, for "It has been seen that, as the breaking of no bond ought to destroy a man, so ought the missing of none to hinder him from growing."[63] She gives examples of saints and religious women as recipients of special consideration, even among the Native Americans, and calls for a change in society's attitudes. In addition, she argues that the institution of marriage has been disrupted, since the mentality and conception have been violated. She states:

Where so many are weak, it is natural there should be many lost; where legislators admit that ten thousand prostitutes are a fair proportion to one city, and husbands tell their wives that it is folly to expect chastity from men, it is inevitable that there should be many monsters of vice.[64]

Fuller, therefore, calls again upon conscience and religious principles to examine true causes for discriminatory behavior and summons women to cease accepting the traditional pattern and to require justice, as she rightly reminds women that it is also their responsibility to take steps and when she says "If you have power, it is moral power."[65]

. Furthermore, Fuller attacks the notion that any legal authority or creative power must render women unfeminine, when she argues that "those who had seen the great

[62] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994) 5.
[63] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[64] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.
[65] Fuller, 31 Jan. 2009 <http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/fuller/woman1.html>.

actresses, and heard Quaker preachers of modern times, would not doubt that Woman can express publicly the fullness of thought and creation, without losing any of the peculiar beauty of her sex."[66] In this way, Fuller is able to establish women's authority and uniqueness in combining apparently contrary principles, although she takes the argument further when she sees no aspect in a pure form in reality, only as a continuum between seemingly binary opposites in nature. Therefore, Fuller acknowledges the provisional validity of the ideas of masculine and feminine characteristics, but states these are only pure concepts, which do not correspond to reality. Fuller is quite revolutionary in her claims that:

Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman. [67]

This duality establishes a perspective, which offers an absolutely different point of view to the traditional notions of segregation into male and female worlds, and perceives the two as constructed entities, and thus transcendable in consciousness and consequently in social and political terms, as well. In fact, such concepts seem linked more to Asian philosophies, including Buddhism, than having the their base in a Puritan/Protestants ethos that dualized the world through, for example, the establishment of a patriarchal society. In addition, this notion of fluidity between the sexes may help to account for "queer" (lesbian, gay, transsexual) gender positions, but it was probably too radical an analysis to have been accepted in Fuller's time, and seems to have been of greater utility to more recent gender studies. Nevertheless, the idea of the energy fluctuations thus posited may be seen as echoed in later works of writers such as Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1928):

[66] Fuller NWC 296.
[67] Fuller NWC 301-302.

If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. But it would he well to test what one meant by man-womanly, and conversely by woman-manly, by pausing and looking at a book or two.[68]

The same idea almost eighty-five years after Fuller's suggestion is utilized by Woolf to explain the creative process of men and women when creating literature and its effect on culture. This is interesting, especially since Woolf's essay is considered as one of the prime texts of first-wave feminism. The idea of the inability to be fertile in producing work without possessing both the masculine and feminine elements is quite interesting, but the degree of both aspects still appears more rational and quite strictly separate without allowing for discussion of any degree of these aspects in a person, whereas Fuller's notion is more volatile and nearing a spirituality element. In fact, Fuller later appeals on the basis of the notion of the soul that could be simplified to the idea that energy remains energy and should not be degraded into material concepts. She states:

Let us be wise, and not impede the soul. Let her work as she will. Let us have one creative energy, one incessant revelation. Let it take what form it will, and let us not bind it by the past to man or woman, black or white.[69]

Fuller's interests are thus universal, appealing to the ideal of American equality, the Universal and God's law, the transcendental concept of the "Over-Soul."[70] She sees harmony in the unity of all souls when she states:

[68] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 25 March 2011 <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/chapter6.html>.
[69] Fuller NWC 302-303, GL 1422.

Every relation, every gradation of nature is incalculably precious, but only to the soul which is poised upon itself, and to whom no loss, no change, can bring dull discord, for it is in harmony with the central soul.[71]

Taking an analytical approach, Jeffrey Steele in his book *Transfiguring America: Myth, Ideology and Mourning in Margaret Fuller's Writing,* offers several points of view on Fuller's style--for example, the disturbance it caused Lydia Maria Child who was

perplexed by writing that seemed to exhibit "too much *effort*". "The stream is abundant and beautiful [..] but it always seemed to *pumped* rather than to *flow*". [..] Thomas Wentworth Higginson [who] found *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* [..] "full of thoughts and suggestions … yet discursive and unmethodological" [and the readers'] [..] concern with Fuller's stylistic difficulty, preferring the relative directness and narrative simplicity of her European dispatches[72]

Indeed, Fuller's style is quite complex; the essay is extremely long, the arguments are scattered in the text, and all the various allusions make it appear more like works by Edmund Spencer--in particular, all the myths and legends of the Greeks, that must have been known only to the intellectual circles, not the common public. The divergence to dialogues, quotations from the Bible, the classics, and literature of the time sometimes appears to shift the discourse away from the main argument, yet the movement is quite controlled. Agreeing with Steele, one should be able to see that "Rather than focusing on the equivalence of different textual events, it seems more useful to examine how coexistence and collision in Fuller's writing facilitates the *performance* of feminism"[73] it is useful to examine the

[70] Based on Emerson's essay "Over-Soul"
[71] Fuller NWC 303.
[72] Jeffrey Steele, *Transfiguring America: myth, ideology and mourning in Margaret Fuller's writing* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011) 105-106.
[73] Steeley 106.

influence on Fuller's style. One such influence, according to Annette Kolodny, who sees Fuller's style as a form of conversation, might have been on Richard Whatley's *Elements of Rhetoric.*[74]--although, as Steele comments, Fuller could not use the same legal authority as Whatley for lack of a legal position, which was a male privilege in the nineteenth century.[75] It must be argued that the *Dial's* policy was to publish works and not the names of its authors, thus Fuller could have escaped from formal authority, and it was Horace Greeley who had her tract published. Whether Fuller *performed* feminism or not is perhaps not as important as the fact that she was one of the ardent voices of the women's cause in her time. Perhaps, as Reynolds says:

> Despite the importance of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* as a American feminist documents, critics such as Perry Miller who have concentrated on Fuller to the exclusion of other women authors have missed a key element of antebellum woman's culture: the dark brooding revolutionary rage that characterized many literary expressions of what was called "women's wrongs". "[76]

Nevertheless, with her tough mind and encyclopedic knowledge, Fuller's importance may be seen even today, not only because she described her era and presented the situation of women to the American public, but because on the basis of her ideas we are able to view the situation of women around the world. Current news is full of information about the inequality of women, a recent case being the situation of women in Darfur. Women who have managed to flee to Chad from the attacks of the *janjaweed*, or military guerrillas said to be supported by the government, have not been spared rape and forced marriages by their families abroad. The position of these women continues to be appalling, and their rights in

[74] Steeley 107.
[75] Steeley 107.
[76] Reynolds 350.

terms of law in the 21st century are in many ways similar to those of the American women of Fuller's era, whose children were the property of the husband. Luckily, Fuller's advantage was that she was able to work upon the psychology of the U.S. and the principles inscribed in the Declaration of Independence; but where there is no such precedent it must simply be the will of the people to change their mentality—and, thereby, their conditions. Perhaps, one might dare to say that Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* might serve as an inspiration to women in the Arab world at times of social unrest and upheaval—not because, in the 21st century, it is seen as the product of a superior American culture, but because, above all, it is written for and on behalf of women, and even more, on behalf of the soul, which yearns for true democracy and for freedom to develop and progress.

5. Women's Suffrage Movement

5.1 Solid Ground for the Suffrage Movement

"Men their rights and nothing more; women their rights and nothing less,"[1] this statement by Susan B. Anthony became the resounding motto of the suffrage movement. Women's inequality in the eyes of the law surely had to change, and well aware little change could be done without political representation, women diligently strove for the right to vote. Solid foundations were lain by the westward expansion, industrialization, and the experience, methods, and tactics derived from the abolition and temperance movements. All of these factors permitted women to recognize and redress the injustice of their situation. The gradual improvement and extension of education and training linked to the preceding factors also provided both incentive and instrument in the drive for women's political rights.

Provision of educational opportunities for women became necessary, as the scholar Flexner says:

> Women were not only entering the new textile mills, they were also in increasing demand as teachers for a rapidly growing population. The need to equip them for the duties being laid upon them was becoming harder to deny.[2]

The factual necessity for the workforce reinforced, and was reinforced by, women's ideological claims and by resulting ideological conflicts within nineteenth-century American society, which was breaking many taboos. Under the circumstances, even the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft were beginning to be reconsidered. Although these reconsiderations were modified and limited, the influence was perceptible. For example,

[1]Susan B. Anthony House, 2009, 20th March 2011 < http://susanbanthonyhouse.org/her-story/biography.php>.
[2] Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 23.

Hannah Mather Cocker emphasized that education of women should be limited in certain fields, but like Wollstonecraft, she rejected women's inferiority. She states:

> although there must be allowed some moral and physical distinction of the sexes agreeably to the order of nature, still the sentiment must predominate that the powers of the mind are equal in the sexes. [3]

Thus, though Cocker cannot be considered entirely feminist because she still believes in male superiority in certain aspects, she does show the change in women's consciousness and the growing belief in equal abilities. Such beliefs challenged the scientific beliefs of the day, that the female brain was smaller in capacity and thus inferior to its male counterpart. Also subject to growing scrutiny were certain religious views that helped to hold women in the realm of the domestic circle. Such views were challenged even by men:

"The domestic function of woman does not exhaust her powers," the Rev. Theodor Parker preached in Boston in 1853. "To make one half of the human race consume its energies in the function of housekeeper, wife and mother is a monstrous waste of the most precious material God ever made."[4]

If the powers of women were to be understood more broadly, such capacities demanded more than household duties. The "New Women" were to challenge taboos concerning women's work (only the jobs of governess or teacher were acceptable as belonging to the female sphere), and education was to prepare a new generation of conscious and revolutionary women. Women such as Frances Wright (born in Scotland) began to emerge on the scene and pave the way for free education, addressing not only female audiences but also audiences of workingmen who decided to support the cause. Emma Willard's new pedagogical approach to female studies and the establishment of Oberlin College—which

[3] Hannah Mather Cocker, *Observations on the Real Rights of Women* (Boston: 1818) 41.
[4] Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963) 85.

provided similar education for the male and female students who attended the institution—both supported and developed the women's cause and provided precedent for the establishment of Mary Lyon's school, Mount Holyoke, in 1837 .

Industrialization in the North and the concomitant establishment of mills led many women to work in conditions that were appalling. Although factory work was one means for single women to gain independence and income, it was estimated they were paid only a fourth of men's wages in 1833[5]. This inequality of pay, with much higher working hours, was to persist even into the twentieth century. The Lowell mill girls became pioneers in using tactics to stop speed-up loads with pay decrease and enforced solidarity amongst themselves. Unfortunately, they lacked the money and time to form real labor organizations and, lacking the vote, they had little power to bring about radical change. In fact, these conditions prevailed not only in the mills but also in other factories. When American women asserted their rights, immigrants were employed in their place. It was a long time before any real measures were taken to deal with the problems of ill-paid workers, overcrowded worker housing, and locked mills or factories, where people worked with flammable materials and inadequate emergency egress. Sadly, history must often provide people with catastrophes in order to make them aware and willing to change the situation. One such was the tragic Triangle Fire on the 25th of March 1911, where more than 140 working class women died. The tragedy became emblematic of the irresponsibility of employers and forced the state of New York to investigate the situation and to formulate remedial legislation. But the regulatory laws already existed, as editorials of the day wrote:

"Crowded workrooms in such a condition that a slight outbreak of fire can convert them into furnaces within a few minutes should not be tolerated in this city. No new laws are

[5] Flexner 50.

needed. Enforcement of existing laws is imperative." Why are not existing laws enforced? There is but one reason: Clothing manufacturers either bribe crooked office-holders or take advantage of inadequate inspection.[6]

This tragedy served as a means of drawing attention to the injustice of workers in general, but more notably, to the consciousness of women themselves, since the majority of the workers were women. The need for a trade union and the need for a voice and representation began to become more and more urgent.

In addition, laws existed which stated (among other things) that upon marriage the husband was the sole proprietor of the woman's earnings and property. This was abused by many men who became alcoholics. They took advantage of the law that gave women no protection and resorted to violence and tyranny, leaving them often destitute to raise the children. Only gradual change by state legislatures could ameliorate the bitter situation, and it was this environment that made women demand changes in legislation concerning women's rights. New tactics finally led to changes in New York State, where in 1848 the "Married Women's Property Act allowed married women an expansion of property rights and served as a model for many other states from 1848-1895."[7]

It was the injustice and the ill-treatment of women that got out of hand because of heavy drinking that became the chief reasons why so many women were dedicated to the temperance movement prior to the women's rights movement. In fact, "the two leading figures in the early suffrage movement, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, had begun primarily as temperance workers. So devoted was Anthony to the temperance cause that as late as 1851 – three years after the Seneca Falls convention – she was still

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[6]Samuel Gompers, "Hostile Employers See Yourselves as Others Know You," *American Federationist*, May 1911, 28th March 2011 <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire/primary/newspapersMagazines/af_0511.html> .

[7] Property Rights of Women, 28th April 2011 <http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_rights.htm>.

debating whether to devote herself to temperance or to women's rights."[8] Thus, it is possible to see one of the potential dangers for a rift in the suffrage movement, a rift which could occur on the subject of the importance of each cause, causes that were at the same time very closely connected. The campaigns were extremely exhausting--lecturing, touring, and convincing people about the cause had to be done endlessly and from state to state. Examples of this toil are numerous and lasted for years. One such example was Frances Willard:

> In 1879 Willard led a campaign from Evanston to convince the Illinois legislature to grant women the right to vote in local referendums on the question of liquor. Although the effort was unsuccessful, it signaled Willard's lifelong commitment to suffrage as well as temperance and gave her the national attention that helped her win election to the presidency of the WCTU.[9]

The overlapping subjects, which caused strain and dispute later in the women's rights movement, also provide examples of the complications of reform legislation. In addition, the experience acquired and the rhetoric developed in the temperance and anti-slavery movements served the suffrage movement well, and "Stanton used temperance language for relaxed divorce laws 'Let no woman remain in the relation of wife with a confirmed drunkard.' "[10]

The restrictions embodied in laws concerning married women led many women to fear or reject marriage. For example, Maria Lydia Child felt indignation at the idea that her husband had to sign her will, and one can easily comprehend what it must have been like for a woman with a despotic husband. How the institution of marriage could serve as a

[8] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999) 358.
[9]Martha H. Patterson, *American New Woman Revisited: A Reader, 1894-1930 (*New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008) 137.
[10] Reynolds 358.

means of forcing women into the background and into submission may be seen in the publication of a poem "in the *Boston Post* whose concluding stanza ran: A name like Curtius' shall be his,/ On fame's loud trumpet blown,/ Who with a wedding kiss shuts up/ The mouth of Lucy Stone."[11] In fact, it may be argued that Stone was lucky to have married Blackwell, because he genuinely loved her and supported her cause. The statement, which they read aloud and declared as a pledge when they got married in 1855, nevertheless, depicts how unjust society was to women. The pledge was thus:

While we acknowledge our mutual affection by publicly assuming the relationship of husband and wife… we deem it a duty to declare that this act on our part implies no sanction of, nor promise of voluntary obedience to such of the present laws of marriage as refuse to recognize the wife as an independent, rational being, while they confer upon the husband and injurious and unnatural superiority… We protest especially against the laws which give the husband:

1. The custody of the wife's person.
2. The exclusive control and guardianship of their children.
3. The sole ownership of her personal and use of her real estate, unless previously settled upon her, or placed in the hands of trustees, as in the case of minors, lunatics and idiots.
4. The absolute right to the products of her industry.
5. Also against laws which give to the widower so much larger and more permanent an interest in the property of his deceased wife than they give to the widow in that of the deceased husband.
6. Finally, against the whole system by which 'the legal existence of the wife is suspended during marriage' so that, in most States, she neither has a legal part in the choice of her

[11] Quoted in Flexner 65.

residence, nor can she make a will, nor sue or be sued in her own name, nor inherit property.[12]

It may be said that the pledge included most points of legislation which were abusive to women and which the feminists aimed to defeat. The brief outline of the pledge may serve as a brief outline of the feminists' program in their fight for equality. These women had a strong political program, drawing on experience from both the Temperance and the Abolitionist movements. The Convention at Seneca Falls in 1848, which became the starting point for the woman's rights movement in the United States, was sparked by the realization that women needed far more than household duties and needed to challenge social norms to gain freedom. Using the Declaration of Independence as her inspirational text, Elizabeth Cady Stanton paraphrased it into the Declaration of Principles explicitly to include the rights of women. In addition to the above rights, women had to fight for their right to speak in front of mixed audiences. For example, the Grimké sisters, who were the first to address a mixed audience at an abolitionist meeting, met with great hostility for their "unladylike" behavior, with the majority of persecution coming from church leaders.

The harsh life in the West and the more equal division of physical labor between the sexes there, were among the reasons why western states would be the first to give women the vote. Nevertheless, apart from more or less genuine belief in equality, the West—including Wyoming, the first state to give women the vote in 1869—was a vast territory with the lowest population, and the vote was a good means of attracting women to the area. However, it was not only the liberty that the frontier was beginning to provide to women that was changing the perception of life; it was the whole image of the woman that was changing there. As Lesley Ferris remarks:

[12] Quoted in Flexner 59.

Despite the predominance of the True Womanhood ideology, the practical reality was that women often pioneered their way west on an equal footing with the men and out of sheer necessity discarded any pretence of 'femininity'. One of the many examples is that of Kate White, who left a refined middle-class existence in Virginia to travel west, riding a horse, using a six-shooter and winning a reputation for being 'as big and broad and capable as a strong man.'[13]

The image of independent strong women with guns began to contradict the "fair sex" ideology, but it also became symbolic of change. The division into spheres was undermined, and there were no more pretexts that could be used to discard it. As Frances Willard said "There are no separate interests for women. One laboratory of brain, one battery of heart, one river of blood unites the sexes, and they cannot be separated by any foolish chatter."[14] Similar ideologies thus became the foundation for the suffrage movement, and as this conception of women's roles gained acceptance, that acceptance was to bolster the feminist cause in other states. After Wyoming approved women's suffrage, Colorado followed in 1893; by 1914 eleven states had given women the right to vote, and ten of these were west of the Mississippi.[15] As Willard pointed out:

Look at Wyoming, where thirty years ago men granted women the suffrage. Wyoming was then a territory. It became a question of whether it should not become a state, and thus obtain rank and privilege in the Federal government. It was mooted that women suffrage should be dropped. The men absolutely declined to enter on this condition. [..] And it is the only state where there exists an educational test for the suffrage for both sexes.[16]

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[13] Quoted in Lesley Ferris, "The Golden Girl," *The New Woman and Her Sisters Feminism and Theatre 1850-1914,* ed. Viv Gardner and Susan Rutherford (New York : Harvester Wheatsheaf,1992) 42.
[14] Patterson 139.
[15] Elizabeth Jameson, "Women as workers, women as civilizers: True Womanhood in the American West," *Frontiers*, vol. vii, no.3 (1984) 4. Quoted in Ferris 42.
[16] Patterson 139.

As men backed women in asserting their rights, Wyoming and the West became pioneers in the suffrage movement and the first region to embrace the feminists. “The victory in Colorado was important because it was the first state where men voters actually went to the polls and gave women the vote.” [17] One of the reasons why opposition by the liquor industry and the politicians was not met there was because those groups did not believe that suffrage could win. The development of new tactics also proved essential:

In Idaho in 1896 there was little opposition; however, the campaign was of interest chiefly as the first instance where suffrage work was done on an election precinct or district basis, a form of organization that was to reach its highest development, and prove the determining factor for victory, the most bitterly contested battleground of all – New York State – just twenty-one years later. [18]

Thus, new grass-roots structures of campaigns that thoroughly canvassed all localities became a means of helping to raise the effectiveness of the women's suffrage movement.

Unlike the North and West, however, the South retained the traditions of the social order and women’s submissiveness. There, any seeming attack on tradition and the social order more reliably provoked defensive retaliation. The Grimké sisters, both from the South, pointed to the numerous cases of injustice. They attacked the established double standards linked to morality by attacking the institution of slavery, as well as showing its relation to the white women’s unequal position in society. One of these injustices was sexual predation by white men on female slaves, a fact attested to by the 588 352 mulattoes in the 1860 Census, with the statistics revealing that out of every hundred colored births the ratio of mulattoes was almost one to five.[19] The Grimkés saw this as immoral and also as a threat to the white family and morality: “It is *not* the slave alone who suffers from the

[17] Flexner 214.
[18] Flexner 214.
[19] The US Population 1860, 30th April 20011<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1860.html>.

licentiousness of the Master and his sons, but the wronged and dishonored wife and daughters who are deeply injured and weep in secret places."[20] The leading position of the white man in the South, without any countervailing authority on the woman's part to discourage his ill-doings, was embedded in the culture, laws, and religious points of view that advocated his supremacy. Under these circumstances, the wife could do nothing but "weep". In addition, as Flexner points out, women in the South were:

isolated by a slave society from the movement for greater equality and opportunity that began to emerge among northern women [..] southern society was enormously repressive [..] no movement existed in the South either to stimulate white women on behalf of the bondsman or inspire them to transcend their own restricted sphere of existence.[21]

The intimate connection between slavery, which was one of the means of maintaining the economy of the country since the plantations depended primarily on the slaves, and the women's position—which if loosened could violate the status quo—inclined the male-dominated political system to keep both women and slaves under severe surveillance and restriction. In justification, many Southerners asserted, even in Congress, that women were the "weaker" sex and thus should not meddle in law and politics.

These notions were, however, frequently attacked by former slaves, and one of the key figures in this regard was Sojourner Truth, an ardent advocate of women's rights. Her arguments against male resistance to granting women their rights are recorded in her famous speech "*Ain't I a Woman?*" delivered in 1851 at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in Akron. The speech delivered goes thus:

"Well, chilern, whar dar is so much racket dar must be something out o'kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de women at de Norf all a talkin' 'bout rights, de white

[20] Quoted in Flexner 20.
[21] Flexner 73-74.

man will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all dis here talkin' bout? Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best place every whar. Nobody eber help me into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or gives me any best place… and ar'n't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm!...I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me – and ar'n't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well – and ar'n't I a woman? I have borne thirteen chilern and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother's grief, non but Jesus heard - and ar'n't I a woman? Den dy talks 'bout dis ting in de head – what dis dey call it?" "Intellect," whispered some one near. "Dat's it honey. What's dat got to do with women's rights or niggers' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?... 'Den dat little man in black dar, he say women can't have as much rights as man, cause Christ want a woman. Whar did your Christ come from?...Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman. Man had nothing to do with him."[22]

Although Gage recorded Truth's speech into a heavy southern accent, the message was clear. Truth demonstrates that African-American women were not treated as "ladies," and nobody considered them a "weaker" sex. She argues that the pretexts often used to bar women from participation in politics (lack of education and/or inferior intellectual capacities) have no connection to basic rights, which women were thus denied. Furthermore, she attacks the notions of religion valorizing women's submissiveness. Her argument is that a man has no valid power over a woman, since Christ was born of God and a woman, a fact which denies a man's supremacy in any way.

[22] Sojourner Truth "Ar'n't I a Woman?"(as recorded by France Gage), *Nineteenth Century American Women Writers,* ed. Karen L. Kilcup (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) 58.

Instances of Truth's life reveal how alarming the situation of the slaves, and particularly of slave women, was. Truth was not only the first African-American to win her child in a case against a white man, but also one of the lucky women to have been able to recover her child and be able to keep it, because, according to the law, even in the white society the children still remained the property of the husband. The account of Truth's determination is moving, especially since she is treated with contempt, as, for example, manifested in the conversation with Mrs. Gedney, mother–in-law of the man who had sold Truth's son:

'Dear me! What a disturbance to make about your child! What, is *your* child, better than *my* child? My child is gone out there, and yours is gone to live with her, to have enough of every thing, and be treated like a gentleman!' And here she laughed at Isabel's absurd fears, as she would represent them to be. 'Yes,' said Isabel, '*your* child has gone there, but she is *married,* and my boy has gone as a *slave*, and he is too little to go so far from his mother. Oh, I must have my child .'[23]

The alarm at the loss and the unequal position of the two races prove the point of condescending behavior even more strongly. Testimony to the brutal character of the man Mrs. Gedney's daughter had married is then provided by Isabel's (Truth's) son, who had been brainwashed to believe that his mother would do him harm and therefore to insist on staying with his master. It was only after being taken away and calmed down with bonbons and tenderness that he was able to admit the brutalities committed upon him by his white owner. As is said of Truth after the incident:

[23] Narrative of Sojourner Truth, 1st February 2011 <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850.html>.

She commenced as soon as practicable to examine the boy, and found, to her utter astonishment, that from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, the callosities and indurations on his entire body were most frightful to behold. His back she described as being like her fingers, as she laid them side by side.

'Heavens! what is all *this?*' said Isabel. He answered, 'It is where Fowler whipped, kicked, and beat me.' She exclaimed, 'Oh, Lord Jesus, look! see my poor child! Oh Lord, "render unto them double" for all this! Oh my God! Pete, how *did* you bear it?'

'Oh, this is nothing, mammy–if you should see Phillis, I guess you'd *scare!* She had a little baby, and Fowler cut her till the milk as well as blood ran down *her* body. You would *scare* to see Phillis, mammy.'

When Isabella inquired, 'What did Miss Eliza * say, Pete, when you were treated so badly?' he replied, 'Oh, mammy, she said she wished I was with Bell. Sometimes I crawled under the stoop, mammy, the blood running all about me, and my back would stick to the boards; and sometimes Miss Eliza would come and grease my sores, when all were abed and asleep.' [24]

The horrors the boy depicts here paint a true picture of the reality of this era. In her life, Truth was a witness to the cruelty of slavery. Her life and what was done to her children exemplify various brutalizations of the time. Nevertheless, she was also capable of empathizing with white women who were potential victims of domestic violence. She feared, for example, for the well-being of Elizabeth Fowler, the sister of the man who had sold her boy; Mrs. Fowler had been kind enough to soothe her son, and Isabel/Truth anticipated that, in such a case, the brutality of Fowler's husband would not be limited to

[24] Truth 1st February 2011, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/truth/1850/1850.html>.

slaves. Thus, the accounts of her life not only show the restrictions of the South and slave life, but also point to a common cause the Abolitionists and Suffragists shared.

5.2 Splits Within and Outside the Movement

The connection between the Abolitionists and the women's rights movement were visible from the overlapping issues with which both were concerned – the demand for freedom, equality, and enforcement of basic human rights including the right to vote. The intimate link was there not only because the position and inequality of women was directly linked to the concept of a denial of basic human rights but also because many of the slaves were women. Therefore, although the prime issues for Abolitionists were freedom and abolition of slavery as an institution, the issues to ensue among both women and former slaves, were laws that would secure both groups their rights—and one of these would be suffrage. There was a huge debate whether suffrage should be included in the program of the convention in Seneca Falls in 1848. It was rejected at first, but since it was very much supported by the ardent spokesperson for Abolitionism and a former slave, Frederick Douglass, it became part of the program. Nevertheless, the close association of the two movements discouraged some from participating. For example, the historian Reynolds points out:

So closely associated did the extreme Garrisonian wing become with the rising women's rights cause that in 1840 a number of prominent reformers abandoned the antislavery cause because they thought it was straying toward the "heresy" of women's rights.[25]

Indeed, this points to the facts that the antislavery movement was intimately connected to women and that many of its supporters were women. This factor was causing fear because although formally women could be supporters, they could not be official members, as is

[25] David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1999) 360.

demonstrated by the fact they had to set up their own Female Anti-Slavery Society. Also, when in 1840 the World Anti-Slavery Convention was held in London, the American female delegates were not given seats on the grounds that only men were allowed to attend and Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton had to be seated passively in the galleries. [26] Men like William Lloyd Garrison went to sit with the women; the African-American delegate Charles Remond refused to attend, stating he had been helped to get to London primarily by women's organizations and felt indebted to them.[27] Such treatment caused indignation and created awareness of need for an organization that would deal uniquely with the issues of women. Nevertheless, the disagreement in the women's rights cause over suffrage made Henry Stanton, an ardent abolitionist, leave the city when the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls in 1848. Suffrage was one issue, the abolition of slavery another; but without suffrage, further development was impossible for both.

Another thing that these movements had so much in common was that Lucy Stone, like "the Grimkés could not keep the subjects of slavery and woman's rights apart, and like the Grimkés, she roused the ire of the abolitionists who did not want them confused."[28] This fact, however, also demonstrates that a need for two distinct movements was already taking place. In addition, at the 1851 women's right's convention in Akron, Ohio, many women feared that the abolitionist leader Sojourner Truth "would harm their cause [and] begged Mrs. Gage not to give her the floor."[29] Fear had almost stopped women from having one of the women's rights cause's most ardent speakers, who in her famous speech delivered there was able to oppose all arguments that the white male society had imposed.

[26] Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 66.
[27] Flexner 351.
[28] Flexner 64.
[29] Flexner 85.

Nevertheless, gender prejudice as well as racial prejudice had also been part of the problem. This can be demonstrated by the case of Prudence Crandall, whose effort to teach African-American children in 1833-1834 created such danger to their lives that she closed the school down. Very early attempts to teach girls of mixed races together were also met with opposition. (In fact, had such a barrier been overcome at the time when men and women had separate education, segregation, which existed in the USA well into the twentieth century, would have taken a different turn.) Much of the anger of black women towards white women began to be expressed when the suffragists started to compete with the abolitionists/black rights activists and began to work as a separate movement. The resentment between women was felt on several levels. African-American women were, for example, blamed for the number of their illegitimate children (even though it had been the white man's fault), felt resentment on the part of the white women (particularly in the South), and were mistrusted as to their capability of monogamous relationships.

The question of race became an important factor in passing laws in state legislatures. For example, "Senator Brown of Georgia was fearful of the enfranchisement of Negro women; so was Vest of Missouri, who in addition foretold the long-expected dissolution of the American home and the ruin of women's femininity:"[30] Thus, race issues and the fact men stayed conservative in the roles they wanted their wives to maintain made many resist the change. They loathed the change which was taking place, where women were discussing politics and spending time in unions and dedicating time to themselves rather than their husbands.

Tensions started to be created between the abolitionists/black rights advocates and suffragists, and the final split came in 1867-1869 over inclusions in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Women like Sojourner Truth became concerned. Truth argued

[30] Flexner 166.

that "if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before."[31] She thus saw potential danger of the inequality that existed in the white society being transferred into the African-American community as well. Stanton argued that "If that word 'male' be inserted as now proposed, it will take us a century at least to get it out again."[32] After years of experience with the constant battles and humiliation from state to state over women's rights, Stanton felt angry and betrayed. Legislation in certain states provided bills that were declined could be re-submitted only after a long time. In addition, the question of prejudice and race became more and more evident. What angered Stanton more was the uncompromising attitude of Douglass, who only agreed to start fighting for women's rights after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Her hostility came in the form of attacks against African-American men. She declared it to be "a serious question whether we had better stand aside and see 'Sambo' walk into the kingdom [of civil rights] first."[33] As the Christine Stansell points out:

> Stanton objected to the enfranchisement of black men, along with immigrants and uneducated (so she depicted them) workingmen as an outrageous injustice to a white female population she called, in the racial parlance of the times, "Saxon." The denunciations of manhood suffrage need to be put in context. She was not a demagogue, and the outbursts were periodic rather than endemic.[34]

Thus Stanton felt that white educated women were deprived of a right she felt others of an inferior standard were to have beforehand. Her hidden racism would change only through what Comel West would call:

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[31] Sojourner Truth, "*Keeping the Thing Going While Things are Stirring*" – speech delivered at the American Equal Rights Association in 1867. 30 Jan. 2011 < http://www.pacifict.com/ron/Sojourner.html>.
[32] Stanton, *Eighty Years and More* (New York: European Pub. Co., 1898), 242.
[33] Kathi Kern, *Mrs. Stanton's Bible (*Cornell University Press; Ithaca, NY, 2001) 111.
[34] Ellen Carol DuBois, *Elizabeth Cady Satnton, Feminist As Thinker: A Reader In Documents and Essays* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) 33-34.

the perennial process of self-making and self-inventing is propelled by a self-loving and self-trusting made possible by overcoming a colonized mind, body and soul.[35]

By trying to change the prejudice of those around her who limited her freedom, Stanton had failed to examine herself and her inner form of superiority, which may be derived from the fair sex ideology. Over time, Stanton's views on the race issue began to moderate. Stansell quotes the following:

> From 1881: "I never look a colored man, woman, or child in the face that my soul does not glow with an intense desire ...to give them some sign of my recognition of their equal humanity." And during the 1890s, at the nadir of American racism: "I am much worked up over the infamous Geary bill against admission of the Chinese. ...How my blood boils over these persecutions of the Africans, the Jew, the Indians, and the Chinese. . . . I wonder if these fanatical Christians think that Christ died for these people, or confined his self-sacrifice to Saxons, French, Germans, Italians"[36]

Perhaps realizing the effects her racism had caused, Stanton changed her rhetoric. However, by the 1890s she was also developing a new strategy to gain the franchise, since she realized that without the vote women were not free, and that the immigrants were the only means of gaining that vote. Douglass had insisted on the vote for the African-American males first, on the grounds that white women had had more privileges than former slaves and that white women have some type of guarantee since they can always depend on their male relatives.[37]

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[35] Cornel West, "Black Strivings in a Twilight Culture," in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Cornel West, *The Future of the Race* (New York: Knopf, 1996) 91-92.

[36] Christine Stasell "Missed Connections: Abolitionist Feminism in the Nineteenth Century" ed. Ellen Carol DuBois, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Feminist As Thinker: A Reader in Documents and Essays (New York: New York University Press, 2007) 33-34.

[37] Philip S. Foner ed. *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*. Lawrence Hill Books (Chicago: The Library of Black America 1999) 600.

Stanton absolutely disagreed on the point and claimed African-American women were exposed “"to a triple bondage that man never knows, that of slavery, gender, and race.”[38]

However, what Stanton had missed was the point that African-American women were viewed in a different light and had taken on a different role within their community. She failed to see that the slave system (and the post-slavery African-American system) had rules of its own:

> As a rule the Negro woman as wife and mother was the mistress of her cabin, and, save for the interference of master or overseer, her wishes in regard to mating and family matters were paramount. Neither economic necessity nor tradition had instilled in her the spirit of subordination o masculine authority.[39]

Therefore, the anger of the African-Americans and the prejudice of many white women towards them established alienation between the women themselves, once the split between the abolitionists/black rights activists and the women's rights activists became more visible. This, the crisis within the women's rights movement itself, and a need for wider support were perhaps the main reasons that forced Stanton to re-establish good relationships with the African-American rights activists. In 1869 she published an article called “Women and Black Men,” and as a response got support from Douglass, who wrote an article in 1870 demanding women’s suffrage. In fact, Douglass continued his support, and in 1888 addressed the suffragists:

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[38] Ellen Carol DuBois ed. *The Elizabeth Cady Stanton-Susan B. Anthony Reader: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches.* (USA: Northeastern University Press, September 1994) 69.
[39] Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* (New York, 1956) 334 quoted in Eleanor Flexner and Ellen Fitzpatrick, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge, MA : The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000) 20-21.

My special mission… was the emancipation and enfranchisement of the negro. Mine was a great cause. Yours is a much greater cause, since it comprehends the liberation and elevation of one half of the whole human family [..] [He went even so far as to say] this woman suffrage movement is but a continuance of the old anti-slavery movement…. The fundamental proposition of the woman suffrage movement is scarcely less simple than that of the anti-slavery movement. It assumes that woman is herself. That she belongs to herself.[40]

Support from the black rights activists was given, but their motives too, might have been different and not purely in favor of white women. In 1912 du Bois supported the vote for women, particularly since it would give the vote to African-American women as well. He also remarked on the progress of African-American women:

Except in the rural South, these women have larger economic opportunity than their husbands and brothers and are rapidly becoming better educated. One has only to remember the recent biennial convention of colored women's clubs with its 400 delegates to realize how the women are moving quietly but forcibly toward the intellectual leadership of the race.[41]

Thus, African-American women were becoming better organized, economically independent, and more educated. All of these factors would be important in shaping African-American society. In having joined the suffragists, African-American women were able to attain skills and experience in areas of organization that permitted them to create their own institutions.

[40] Douglass, "Emancipation of Women," address to the New England Woman Suffrage Association, May 28, 1888, in *Frederick Douglass on Women's Rights*, ed. PhilipS. Foner (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992) 116 - 123.
[41] W.E.B. Du Bois "Votes for Women", *The Selected Writings of W.E.B. Du Bois,* ed. Walter Wilson (New York: New American Library, 1970) 151.

In 1917 W.E.B. du Bois discussed the question of women's suffrage. He analyzed two factors influencing African-American men's lack of enthusiasm for the female vote – the desire to support the family, without realizing "the new status of women in the industrial and social life"[42]; and personal injuries and insults (concrete or psychic, whether resulting from prejudice or phobia) inflicted on them by white women. Nevertheless, he encourages them to support the suffrage. He says:

> It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that every single black voter in the State of New York should this month cast his ballot in favor of woman suffrage and that every black voter in the United States should do the same thing whenever and as often as he has opportunity.[43]

This decision is accounted for in several ways. Firstly, he draws a parallel between women and African-Americans. He says:

> as an intelligent, self-supporting human being a woman has just as good a right to a voice in her own government as has any man; and that the denial of this right is as unjust as is the denial of the right to vote to American Negroes.[44]

He thus believes strongly in the dogma of equality that must be put into practice, even though it may not be appealing to the group. He also believes that even though white women will support the cause of white men, they are likely "to learn political justice a great deal more quickly" and that the emergence of these women "into the real, hard facts of life [..]is going to teach them sense in time."[45] More importantly, however, African-

[42] W.E.B Du Bois, "Votes for Women, 1917", *An ABC of color: selections from over half a century of writings of W.E.B Du Bois* (Berlin: Seven Seas Publishers, 1964) 95.
[43] Du Bois ABC 96-97.
[44] Du Bois ABC 96.
[45] Du Bois ABC 96.

American women will be given the vote, and these, as he says, are not likely to be beaten in public like the men, nor, unlike some African-American men, are they to be bribed.

The split between women's rights activists and black rights activists thus opened new room for women of both races. Once the African-Americans showed support for the women's suffrage when they got the franchise, a certain type of peace was established between the two opposing camps. Nevertheless, it might be worth suggesting that the split had, in fact, marked a turning point for the women because it made them establish themselves as an entity even more strongly. However, the splits with other activist groups, which would have allowed women to establish a much stronger base of its own, did not help to prevent splits within the women's rights movement itself. Firstly, many women were forced to choose between their race and their gender, aware of racial prejudice on the side of certain white women. Secondly, women's rights advocates failed to resolve their own goals, and opposing views of what women should aim at and how they should do so caused severe differences. As Flexner states:

> In the late 1860s American women's rights movement actually split apart because of the divorce question. The Boston wing of the movement, led by Lucy Stone, was alarmed at what it regarded as an attempt by Stanton's group in New York to subvert the marriage institution. The Bostonians formed an independent group devoted solely to gaining the vote for women, while the more radical New York group agitated not only for suffrage but for a whole range of social changes, including relaxed divorce laws. [46]

The maintenance of certain codes and the idea of the family as a basis of the society were extremely important to most women. On the other hand, Stanton promoted a push for much

[46] Reynolds 359.

more legislation. Whether this was the principal reason or just the tip of the iceberg, the differences in strategic approach prevailed. Stanton was becoming more radical. She was eager, among many legislative priorities, to have relaxed divorce laws and the right for a woman to determine the number of children she wanted. Even after reconciliation of the factions of the women's rights movement, her life continued in this way. She had no objections to interracial marriage, though she had used racial language about African-American men wanting the vote, and she congratulated Douglass on marrying a white woman in 1884.[47] She also wrote the *Woman's Bible* in the 1890s, alienating herself from most of her fellow suffragists. In addition, she still aimed at a national women's suffrage amendment; while others were becoming more interested in the process of pushing the vote for women state by state.

Furthermore, although the introduction of partial suffrage in Kansas in 1894 led women to stay loyal to the Republican party, under the leadership of Mrs. Laura M. Johnson the suffrage measure was omitted from the party's national program. Despite traditional suffragist loyalty to the GOP, Republican support for suffrage legislation at least temporarily wavered. Another problem which suffrage leaders encountered was the strong opposition of those who had liquor interests, and it was not until Prohibition that their opposition declined. Also, lack of finances made the organization suffer in particular against the liquor and brewery opposition. Furthermore, few women (particularly working women who deprived themselves of coats and other things to support the organization and who were also the main contributors) were able to understand that hearings from Congressional Committees were extremely important even though they were very costly. In addition, there was a change in circumstances, and new immigrant men helped to defeat the women's vote for various reasons – their own beliefs, political machine concerns, and

[47] Frederick Douglass, *Autobiographies: Narrative of the Life, My Bondage and Freedom, Life and Times*. ed. Henry Louis Gates (New York: Jr. Penguin Putnam, Inc., 1994) 1073.

others. It was only a change in tactics and the merging of the competing women's rights associations in 1890 that led to the winning over of immigrants' votes and attainment of national women's suffrage in 1920.

In conclusion, though the abolitionists/black rights activists and suffragists shared many of the same aims, the importance of the suffrage for each group led them to become hostile towards each other until a type of reconciliation was found. The reasons why the split also occurred within the women's rights movement vary; the main reason may partly be due to those women who were caught between their gender and their race. These women, nevertheless, continued to serve as a link between both camps. In addition, splits within the movement may also be attributed to different strategies for achieving goals and different aims besides universal suffrage.

6. Conclusion

Feminism in America has continually undergone a process of development along with other important changes in the consciousness of American women. One way of looking at feminism is through the various aspects of society. This can be done by analyzing the various cultures that existed on the territory--for example, the Native American matrilineal societies. Nevertheless, this thesis is restricted to the development within the patriarchal Puritan/Protestant society and the African-Americans that were imbedded into it through slavery. Feminism may be seen to have had its predecessors in the "proto-feminists" such as Anne Bradstreet; nevertheless, it is with Mary Wollstonecraft and her influence on Americans that real feminist thought began to emerge. This development may be seen around the time of the American Revolution when the formation of a new society led to questioning of female roles and laws concerning women's situation. However, these inquiries were soon discarded, and the gender world was divided into separate spheres of influence. The depiction of a different attitude towards equality of the sexes is visible in the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville.

Another way of looking at feminism is by examining its literature and theatre. The theatre offered women economical, political, and social independence and allowed them to influence other women. Women were able to find means of self-expression on the stage and beyond it, challenge men in the fields of comedy that had previously been considered male spheres of influence, challenge the prescribed norms of behavior, and challenge themselves on finding new identities. New images of women were reflected in the theatre with the westward expansion and industrialization. Furthermore, the theatre provided women with a tool to influence issues such as dress reform or abolitionism. In addition, feminism could

also exploit the theatre industry to promote issues concerning women's rights and to aim for the suffrage.

In the realms of literature, feminism could be found in the development of women's consciousness, and literature brought with it themes that reflected itself in reality and vice versa. Literature reflected the Cult of Domesticity that had developed with the division of the spheres of influence, but also new images of women with the changes of environment brought on by industrialization and westward expansion. In addition, literature was able to develop new genres such as travelogues, guidebooks, adventure novels, or magazines, and various images of women ranging from adventure women that stood on the same footing with men to women torn by passion in sensual novels. It also reflected the cruel realities of women's oppressed lives in the literature of 'women's wrongs' and described the themes of brutal husbands and alcoholism, which were reflected in reality through the temperance or suffrage movements. Women's writing also reflected their double anger – first for the injustice perpetrated against them and second that they were unable to ventilate it because of their gender. Their writing challenged the given laws and conventions that limited their freedom, leading to an abundant production of various writings and speeches. These varied from debates of suffragists that had with time established a program to women without a fixed program like the transcendentalist Margaret Fuller.

Margaret Fuller's life is an example of an outstanding woman who was able to show how to live according to the feminist principle and who was able to challenge the society of her era. Her work is analyzed to depict the lives of women of the era and to trace the development of feminist thought in history, providing possible applications to the modern society as well.

The last chapter deals with the suffrage movement and the factors which provided solid ground for its formation—mainly industrialization, education, and westward expansion. Some factors which helped to change women's consciousness and to make them more aware of the obstacles they encountered are accounted for clearly. Among these the lack of legal protection and lack of rights play a key role in emphasizing the importance of suffrage. The parallel with the abolitionist/black rights movement is also drawn to describe some of the common battles and prejudices that had to be fought against. The organization and involvement in the abolitionist/black rights and temperance movements show some of the tactics and experience that was employed to win the vote. The splits with the abolitionists/black rights activists and the resentment of women are demonstrated through the racial language that was used. The splits in the women's rights movement as a result of the split with the abolitionists/black rights activists may be accounted for, in part, by the fact many women were caught between their gender and their race. Also, disagreements on whether to demand suffrage alone or suffrage and other rights, and on how to achieve either or both, caused further divisions. The partial suffrage in states like Kansas disabled many to vote for a universal suffrage because of party loyalty. In addition, the militancy of some like Elizabeth Cady Stanton caused disagreements on subjects such as divorce laws, since many women still remained conservative about the sacredness of the marriage institution.

Therefore, feminism in America developed with women's beliefs about their right to representation, their right to enjoy the same privileges as men in terms of the legal system, and their right to be treated as human beings in all aspects – the social, the economical and the political. Their fight for their rights came about slowly and met with much hostility, persistent opposition, and many obstacles, but women finally won the battle to secure their basic rights with universal suffrage in 1920. This historical victory serves as both a helpful

reminder and a bold challenge to continue promoting a deeper understanding of feminism in its various forms and developing a more balanced and fruitful presentation of feminism in shaping the future of modern society.

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8. Abstract in English

The objective of this thesis is to trace and depict the beginnings of feminist thought in America. Its aim is to show how feminist thought was developed within the Puritan/Protestant community as well as its effect on the African-Americans who were integrated into the Puritan community as an inferior race through the slave trade.

The thesis uses qualitative and quantitative methods of research. A variety of primary and secondary material is used to describe the beliefs of the people in the era, such as the division of the male and female spheres of influence. The views of both men and women are provided to create a more objective description of the era and its beliefs. In addition, the subject is considered from the American point of view as well as the point of view of foreigners, such as the French historian and political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville. Furthermore, feminism is depicted in various realms of the society – in literature, in the theatre, in the political and in the social life. The quantitative methods include statistical data on wages to prove women were not fairly treated in comparison to men, as well as data from the 1860 Census to prove the drastic effects of slavery upon African-American women and the immorality within the white society's marriage institution.

The conclusion reached is that American feminism developed through a gradual process in which it met with many obstacles in its ardent attempt to become imbedded in society. However, the changes of consciousness that were brought about by the formation of the new country and other factors that nurtured a change of attitude, most notably the westward expansion and industrialization, served as solid ground for the establishment of feminist thought. In addition, great personalities such as Margaret Fuller helped to emphasize the need for a change in the mentality. Literature and theatre also served as

important sources of inspiration and development of women's identity and reflected social, political and economic changes that were taking place. The abolitionist and temperance movements helped women's rights activists to gain experience and acquire tactics that would prove useful in the suffrage movement. The suffrage movement helped to develop women's identity and also served as a means of obtaining many legal rights of which women had previously been deprived. The splits with the abolitionist/black rights movement and within the women's rights movement prove how complex feminism was in its forms. Many African-American women had to face a serious dilemma of choice between race and gender. Disagreements on tactics and on what legal changes women required most (especially on the question of divorce laws) show how complex the issue of the marriage institution was to feminist ideology. The achievement of the right to vote in 1920 serves as an important reminder to continue promoting feminism in its various forms, especially its deeper understanding that tends to create a harmony of political and social equality between the sexes. However, it also serves as a challenge to re-evaluate some of the extreme modern feminist notions of equality.

9. Abstract in Czech

Cílem této diplomové práce je vysledovat a popsat počátky feministického myšlení v Americe. Záměrem je ukázat jak se feminismus vyvíjel v puritánské/protestantské společnosti a také dopady feminismu na Afroameričany a Afroameričanky, kteří byli postupně integrováni do puritánské společnosti jako méněcenní v rámci obchodu s otroky.

Práce využívá kvalitativní a kvantitativní metody výzkumu. V práci je použito množství primárních i sekundárních zdrojů, které popisují přesvědčení lidí té doby, jako bylo například rozdělení na mužské a ženské sféry vlivu. Jsou uvedeny jak pohledy mužů, tak pohledy žen, aby vytvořily objektivní popis a přesvědčení té doby. Navíc je na téma pohlíženo jak z amerického, tak ze zahraničního úhlu pohledu, například z pohledu francouzského historika a politického myslitele Alexise de Tocquevilla. Dále je téma rozebráno z různých sociálních hledisek – z hlediska literatury, divadla, politického a sociálního života. Kvantitativní metody výzkumu zahrnují statistická data mzdových příjmů, které potvrzují, že s ženami nebylo zacházeno rovným způsobem jako s muži, a také data ze sčítání lidu z roku 1860, která potvrzují drastický efekt otroctví na Afroameričanky a nemorálnosti páchané uvnitř manželství bílé společnosti.

Závěr práce poukazuje na to, že se feminismus vyvíjel jako postupný proces, který musel čelit mnoha překážkám, než se nakonec ukotvil ve společnosti. Nicméně, změny ve vědomí, které založení státu s sebou přineslo spolu s dalšími faktory, zejména expanze na západ a industrializace, které připravily živnou půdu pro ukotvení feministických myšlenek ve společnosti. Výjimečné osobnosti jako Margaret Fullerová pomohly zdůraznit potřebu změny v mentalitě. Literatura a divadlo také posloužily jako důležité zdroje pro inspiraci a rozvoj identity u žen, a odráželi sociální, politické a ekonomické změny, které se v té době odehrávaly. Abolicionizmus a hnutí střídmosti pomohly získat zkušenosti a naučit se taktikám, které se ukázaly užitečné v boji za volební právo. Tento boj také pomohl ženám

vyvíjet svoji identitu a posloužil jako cesta k získání mnoha práv a svobod, jichž se do té doby ženám nedostávalo. Rozpory a odtržení od hnutí za zrušení otroctví /za občanská práva Afro-Američanů a rozpory uvnitř samotného hnutí za ženská práva, jsou ukázkou toho, jak byl feminismus ve svých podobách komplexním fenoménem. Mnoho Afroameričanek muselo čelit vážnému dilematu – rozhodnutím mezi rasou a pohlavím. Rozpory v taktikách a v tom, jaká práva ženy toužily získat, obzvláště otázka práva týkající se rozvodu, poukazují, jak komplexní byla záležitost manželství pro feministickou ideologii. Vítězství ze získání volebního práva v roce 1920 slouží jako důležité připomenutí toho, že by se feminismus měl nadále propagovat v jeho různých podobách, především pochopení jeho hlubšího významu, jenž se snaží o vytvoření harmonie v politické a sociální rovnosti mezi muži a ženami. Nicméně, toto vítězství také vyzývá k přehodnocení některých extrémních názorů moderního feminismu na rovnost pohlaví.